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Nick Carter Stories

IN THE SHADOW
~OF DAZAAR~
~ OF ~
AT THE MERCY OF
~ VAMPIRES ~

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IN THE SHADOW OF DAZAAR;

Or, AT THE MERCY OF VAMPIRES.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

GOTHMAR, THE STRANGLER.

Chickering Carter, the first assistant of the celebrated detective, Nicholas Carter, was seated near the window in the study of the detective's Madison Avenue residence in New York. He was looking out upon the gathering darkness, for the sun had gone down and evening shadows were falling like so many indefinite veils over the threads of daylight which still lingered hesitatingly among the haunts of men.

Chick was alone in the house, save for the servants on the basement floor—and, moreover, Chick looked wan and pale, as if he were just recovering from an illness, which, indeed, was the case.

He was stretched in a steamer chair before the open window, enjoying the breeze which sifted in upon him, when he was startled by the sound of a stealthy tread close behind him.

Turning his head quickly, he discovered that there were three other persons, instead of one, in the room with him, and, with a frown upon his face, he essayed to rise.

But the effort was useless; he had not strength sufficient to leave the chair upon which he was reclining, and he sank back again among the cushions with a sigh of helplessness, which brought a smile of derision to the face of the man nearest him.

"The wings of the eagle have been clipped," he said scornfully, smiling so that his snow-white teeth gleamed through the darkness of the room, and his black eyes glistened like two sparks of fire above them. "The claws of the tiger are blunted; they cannot scratch; no?" and he laughed a low, chuckling laugh, which almost brought a shudder to Chick's nerves.

"Who are you?" Chick demanded, in a weak voice, for he had strength scarcely sufficient to speak as he would have spoken.

"Ha!" responded the man grimly. "You cannot fight, so you parley. You cannot resist, so you temporize. Is that it?"

"Who are you, and how did you get here?" demanded Chick again.

"I am Gothmar. Does that tell you aught? And I came in at the door, as you may have observed," added the man, smiling again derisively.

"What do you want?"

"You. I want you!"

The reply was made softly—almost in a whisper, and yet somehow the utterance of it contained a terrible menace, which, although it was indefinable, was, nevertheless, real.

Chick calmed his tingling nerves, for he was so weak that he could not help feeling the effect of this sudden interruption, as he studied the man before him for a moment before he spoke again.

What he saw was a tall, lithe, agile-looking man with a swarthy skin, piercing, wicked, black eyes, and gleaming white teeth, which he showed in an ever-present, but ominous smile. He had straight, black hair, and delicate, handsome features.

And yet, although the features were handsome, there was a suggestion of cruelty and cunning about them which was at once noticeable.

In dress the fellow was not unlike any other man one might see upon the street, save that the clothing did not look the same on his body.

Indeed, when he moved, there was a suggestion about every motion of his body that he was unused to such impedimenta as wearing apparel—as if he had been more accustomed to going about through the world half clad;

and this, indeed, was true, although Chick did not realize it at the moment.

As for the two men who accompanied the stranger, they remained in the background, and in the shadow, so that it was just possible to determine that they were there.

"You want me?" Chick repeated slowly after him. "Why? What for?"

"Ha! Who knows? For toasting, perhaps; for this—if I had my wish;" and he extended one hand, from which dangled a long, slender cord made of braided human hair.

Chick could not repress a start of dread when the ominous cord was dangled before his eyes, for he recognized what it was the instant he saw it.

"The strangler's cord of India," he murmured aloud.

"Ha!" replied the man. "You recognize it. You have seen the like of it before. Perhaps—but no; you have never felt its delicate touch, for, if you had, you would not be talking to Gothmar now."

"Who sent you here, and what do you want?" demanded Chick again, more weakly than before.

"I came from a beauteous lady, sahib, who claims you for her husband. Ha! You seem to require no further information. Your face tells me that you recognize—Grach!" he swore, interrupting himself suddenly to dodge the book which Chick, weak though he was, had thrown at his head.

He smiled again so that his white teeth gleamed more menacingly than ever, and he took a step nearer to Chick Carter.

"Grach!" he said again, evidently using a favorite expletive; and he held the terrible cord out before him until it dangled just in front of Chick's eyes. "Have a care, my clipped eagle, lest I forget the orders I received, and squeeze your throat with this plaything. I was sent here to take you away, not to strangle you, but——"

He paused and shrugged his shoulders while he smiled again.

"Where would you take me, and for what?" asked Chick lamely.

"I would take you to the other half of your duality. I would take you to the most beautiful, the most wise, the most bewitching, the most gracious lady in all the world—the lady who is called Dazaar."

Chick stiffened in his chair and seized the arms tightly in his grasp, as if he would cling to it, and so prevent this man from carrying out his purpose, for he was very weak, and the threat which ordinarily would not have touched him, now seemed like a calamity too horrible to contemplate.*

Never in all his life before had he been placed where he longed to call for help; but now, had there been a chance that his voice might have brought assistance, he would have shouted with what strength he possessed.

Gothmar seemed to divine the thoughts that were passing through his brain, for he smiled his cruel smile yet again, and said:

"Do not call, sahib; nobody will come. We met one of the maids of the household on the stairs, and I silenced her with my cord! as for the others, they are below and will not disturb us—or, if they should, their fate will be the fate I love to confer."

"You have strangled one of the servants of this house?" said Chick incredulously.

"Yes, she hardly knew that I was near. I met her on the stairs. She would have cried out, but, before she could utter a sound, the cord was around her neck—around that white throat. Ha! Sahib, I would rather twist my cord around the neck of a woman than have her wind her arms around my own. There is more joy, more delight, more—but we tarry."

But Chick still sought to temporize, hoping against hope that Nick, or Ten-Ichi, or Patsy, or even Pommery might come.

"You lie to me," he said boldly. "You cannot take me to Dazaar."

"And why, pray? I have but to lift you in these arms, which could carry two like you are, with ease, and so take you to the automobile that waits below; and then—selah! I take you to Dazaar."

"Dazaar is a prisoner," said Chick desperately. "Nick Carter captured her at the meeting of Devil Worshipers, in Westchester."

Gothmar smiled devilishly.

"And has the man who never lies deceived you?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" asked Chick.

"Nick Carter did not capture Dazaar."

"But he did. She was dragged from the platform with a lasso——"

"Tush! When you were struggling with Dazaar beneath the platform, the lasso had already caught its victim, over your head."

Chick started, for he realized all at once that this must be true.

"Who, then, was captured?" he demanded. "Do you mean to tell me that Nick Carter was deceived?"

"No; Nick Carter was not deceived—only for the moment—until he looked upon the person he had captured with the lasso. He knew then that he had made a mistake, but it was too late to rectify it.

"And you were in a swoon at his feet and could not explain, for your blood had drunk of the poison on the pin with which she defended herself. It is a wonder that you did not die, sahib; and you alone have lived to tell that a man's blood may drink of that poison and recover; nor would you have recovered——"

"Well? Go on."

"No. Dazaar may tell you that—if she wishes you to know it."

"And Nick, Ten-Ichi, and the others have let me continue to suppose that Dazaar was all this time in prison," mused Chick, aloud.

"Ah! You were too ill to be told the truth. Now you are strong enough to know—strong enough to be taken to her, where you belong."

"Belong? Belong? I do not belong to that fiend."

"Ay, but you do, by all the rites of her religion, which is older and better than your own. She waits for you.

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* The readers of No. 76 of THE NICK CARTER STORIES, entitled "A Compact With Dazaar," will remember that Chick passed through a terrible experience in the Devil Worshipers' den, during which a sacrilegious marriage ceremony was performed between him and Irma Plavatski, who is Dazaar also. The reader will remember, also, that immediately following the ceremony Irma and Chick disappeared together, in the pit under the platform, and that almost instantly Irma was supposed to reappear, and that Nick Carter lassoed her. A few moments later, Chick returned, staggering into the room and falling at Nick's feet. This story will show that Irma did not reappear—that it was not Irma whom Nick lassoed, and that Chick only escaped from her arms after a terrific struggle; and to the injuries received in that fight his present illness is due.
C. C.

She is the half of your duality, and you are the half of hers. Only the fulfillment of the compact, or death, can free you now."

"My God!"

"Grach!" hissed Gothmar. "Do you dare?"

"Dare what?"

"To call upon that name. Beware, or my cord will do for you what—tush!"

He turned and motioned to his two followers, whereat they stepped forward until they were beside Chick's chair, one at either side of him.

"Take him," he ordered; and Chick felt a sponge thrust against his nostrils, his senses wavered, and, for an instant, he felt as if he were flying through space.

Then all became a blank to him.

CHAPTER II.

THE PALACE OF THE VAMPIRES.

When Chick opened his eyes to consciousness again, he turned them from one side to the other in wonder and amazement; and well he might do so, for it is doubtful if another room like that one existed anywhere in the world—unless in the heart of Tibet.

He could not even conjecture where he was.

Above him, towering loftily, was a dome of glass, cut prismatically, so that the light of the sun in shining through it, took upon its rays a thousand and one shades of color, and, in blending, lent to the room a strange and indescribable glow of atmospheric voluptuousness which somehow got upon the senses and pervaded them with an inexplicable caress.

He was lying upon a wide, low couch as soft as eider down, and yet of sufficient resistance so that he did not sink into it unpleasantly.

The clothing he had worn when Gothmar interrupted his solitude in Nick Carter's study had been removed, and in its place, he was arrayed from head to foot in garments of glossy, silken fabric, as beautiful as it was light and comfortable to the skin.

Shirt, tunic, undergarments, and the long lazy-robe which covered it all, were of the same material, the like of which he had never seen before, and he looked down upon it in utter amazement, doubting for the moment if he were not dreaming, and if he had not had a relapse of his illness and thus brought upon himself an interval of dementia.

But a second glance above and around him brought reassurance, for the room—that great, round room with the glass dome over it, and with its strange furnishings and decorations—was startlingly real.

The blossoming flowers, strange also, but, nevertheless, beautiful and fragrant, were not fruits of the imagination. The mass of tropical foliage with which the borders of the room were banked, the delicate warmth of the atmosphere, like the touch of a tropical sun cooled to freshness by a passing breeze, the twittering of birds as they hopped from branch to branch, ruffling their feathers and cooing to their mates—birds that were unknown to him, and which did not belong to the climate of his own country; the pleasant hissing of a fountain somewhere beyond his range of vision—all tended to lend to his surroundings a touch of Orientalism and unreality which in his weakened physical state almost overcame him.

He wondered for a moment if he were really alive; and then he sought to rise from the divan upon which he was lying.

It was with considerable difficulty that he finally rose to a sitting posture on the edge of the couch, but his head swam so that after a moment he was glad to return to the recumbent attitude.

Lying upon his back, he presently discovered that immediately above his head there was a metal gong suspended, with the hammer for it within easy reach of his hand, and, devoured by curiosity, he struck a sharp blow upon it.

Then, before the echo of the gong had died away, Gothmar appeared beside the couch, as silently and as suddenly as if he had leaped into being out of the stillness of the room.

"At your service, sahib," he said, showing his gleaming teeth and flashing his beady eyes upon the sick man.

"Where the devil did you spring from?" demanded Chick, annoyed that the fellow should appear so suddenly and mysteriously.

"I sprang from an eyetooth of the great god Siva, whence all good stranglers come," replied Gothmar imperturbably.

"Just now," he continued, "I am delegated to serve you, and, sahib, if you would win my fealty and admiration—nay, my adoration, I pray that you will order me to use my cord upon some human being. Order me to strangle somebody."

"All right," said Chick boldly. "You will win my eternal gratitude if you will go at once and strangle Dazaar; if it is impossible for you to do this, kindly perform the operation in which you seem to take such delight upon yourself."

Gothmar staggered back as if he had received a blow, and, for an instant, he looked as if he were frightened, for the smile left his face and his eyes looked scared.

Then he leaned forward and whispered tensely:

"For less than what you have said just now, I have strangled many others. Beware, sahib!"

"Did I shock you?" asked Chick, laughing.

"You frightened me. If I had given utterance to such a statement, to such a request, I would have perished instantly—have dropped dead before your eyes."

"Indeed! It is a pity then that you did not say it."

"Grach! Sahib, would you anger me?"

"Yes, if in your fury I could persuade you to strangle yourself—or Dazaar."

"Again! Again!"

"Certainly; as many times as you please, if once would not do the work."

"I wonder that you are alive, sahib. Such words from another would seal his doom at once. There would be no future for him, not even in Hades."

"Poor chap! Look here, Gothmar—that is your name, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Where am I? Where is this place to which you have brought me?"

"That I may not tell you."

"Why?"

Gothmar shrugged his shoulders.

"Where is Dazaar?" continued Chick. "Where is this Queen of Hades? Where is Irma Plavatski?"

"She is near—quite near."

"I am her prisoner, then?"

"Her prisoner? No, her consort."

"Gothmar," said Chick quietly, "do you know what I would do if I had the strength that was mine before I was attacked by this fit of sickness—before I was poisoned by the touch of that pin you told me about? Do you know what I would do to you?"

"No, sahib."

"I'd take that hair cord away from you and wind it around your own villainous neck, and I would laugh while I choked the miserable life out of you."

"And so," replied Gothmar, without a change of expression on his face, "you would send me to paradise, for than I thank you, sahib."

"What an awful scoundrel you are, Gothmar," said Chick, in disgust.

But Gothmar only smiled, precisely as if Chick had paid him a great compliment.

"I await your orders, sahib," he said presently.

"Very good; is Dazaar here—in this house, if it is a house?"

"Dazaar is almost within touch of your hands, sahib."

"Indeed! I wish you would ask her to come within reach of my voice, within sight of my eyes."

He closed them wearily for an instant, for the sight of Gothmar angered him; and when he opened them again, he started violently, for Gothmar had disappeared, and in his place, as if one person had changed to the other without moving at all, stood the beautiful Irma Plavatski—the Queen of Hades—Dazaar herself.

If she had been beautiful when Chick had seen her at other times, she was thrice entrancing in her attractiveness now, as she stood over him, looking down upon him where he reclined upon the couch. There was an expression of angelic purity on her features and in her wondrous eyes.

Her red lips were parted in a smile, and her teeth glowed like pearls between them. Her cheeks were flushed with the bloom of youth and innocence, and her whole attitude was suggestive of an exact paradox of what she really represented.

"I am here," she said, in a low tone; and at the same time she reached out one of her hands and touched him on the forehead.

Impatiently he shook his head free from the touch, but she seemed not to notice the act, for she still smiled down upon him indulgently.

"Where is this wonderful palace of yours to which you have brought me, a prisoner?" he asked; "and why have you brought me here at all? For the purposes of torture, I suppose. Is it not so?"

"If you were to ask one question at a time, you would be more assured of satisfactory replies," she responded.

Then she turned and drew a hassock near to the edge of the couch and seated herself upon it.

"As you please," he said. "Where is this place to which you have brought me?"

"It is in the mountains, a day's journey from the city of New York," she replied. "It is a retreat which I directed my agents to purchase for me long ago, when I first invaded this country of yours. And I have had it decorated to please me—to remind me of my own palace among the mountains of Tibet."

"How long have I been here? When was I brought here?" questioned Chick.

"You have been here seven days. Gothmar brought you here one week ago, and since that time, you have been sleeping, while I have been drawing the poison from your veins."

"Good Heaven!" ejaculated Chick.

"You would have died otherwise," she continued. "Nothing could have saved you. You might have lingered for months, but the spells would have returned, and you would have died. Only I could save you."

"Humph!"

"You live because I knew how to save you. You live because I could keep you unconscious while I drew the poisoned blood from your veins and substituted new and healthy blood in its place. You live because I have done this."

"One would think that you were a set of vampires here," he said scornfully.

"And one might say not far wrong, as you understand the application of that word," she retorted. "It needed the act of what you would call a vampire to save you. We, who worship Satan, honor vampires, because we know how to make use of them."

"Human vampires," he murmured.

"Aye, if you will have it so. We have another word for it, less harsh. In your own case, I have been the vampire; I have saved your life. Have——"

"You!"

"Have you no words of thanks for me?"

"Curses, rather," he growled, shocked almost beyond endurance by the suggestion in her remarks. And her red lips, which a moment before had seemed so beautiful to him, now looked hideous. But she only smiled as she leaned over him with her beautiful eyes, strangely alight, fixed upon his own.

And while he gazed, fascinated with horror, and yet too weak to resist her, she bent down nearer and nearer to him, until he could feel her breath fanning his cheeks and brow.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE TOILS OF A SIREN.

But it was only to touch those same brilliant lips against his brow, for she straightway resumed her former attitude.

"I have frightened you," she said.

"Aye! you have. You do frighten me—and it is a new sensation. I am not accustomed to the feeling."

"I know that; but do not blame yourself. It is due to your condition of weakness and helplessness; a condition that is necessary to my purpose."

"For God's sake tell me what the purpose is, then."

"For God's sake I will tell you nothing, but, for the sake of the devil and his followers, I might tell you much."

"Then in the devil's name tell me. Do not tantalize me," Chick begged.

She smiled brightly when he uttered that expression in his desperation.

"There is hope for you," she said. "I will yet win you over to our cause."

"Not while I live," he retorted.

"Ah! yes I will."

"Do you pretend that you do not know who and what I am?" he asked.

"I know perfectly well who and what you are."

"Last night—no; it was not last night. When was it?"

"When you received the scratch of the pin which put you here?"

"Yes."

"It was two weeks ago. You were a week in the house in New York before I sent Gothmar to bring you here, and you have been a week here."

"Very well, then. At that time, when we descended into the pit together, you supposed I was Nick Carter. Do you still think that?"

"Why no," she smiled. "Why should I think that?"

"But it was Nick Carter whom you pursued, and not I whom you desired."

"It was not Nick Carter with whom I took the oath of duality. Who took that oath with me? It was you, was it not?"

"Well?"

"We cannot go behind that oath. It is the wedding ceremony of the worshipers of Satan; it was our marriage feast. In the language of your own people you are my husband, and I am your wife."

"Never!"

She only smiled at his vehemence.

"Your affections must be readily transferable," he sneered. "Then, all your heart, all your love, all your passion was directed toward him—and now——"

"Now you are its object," she said. "Does that seem strange to you? It is strange to me also."

She started from the hassock where she was seated, and crossed the room, but only to return again.

Chick could see that she was using all the power there was in her to suppress an emotion which she seemed to wish to conceal, and then, like the sudden rush of a storm, it burst upon him.

"Bah!" she said. "Do you think that I would choose you as against Nick Carter? Do you think that you can fill the place that should have been taken by him? Do you think that I could love you as I would have loved him? Do you think that you are aught to me save the cursed human being with whom, by a fraud of yours and his, I took the oath of duality? I—even I—have no choice now. The oath is taken. It is subscribed. You are mine and I am yours. The devil himself cannot alter that, and I am bound by it, and you are bound by it as firmly as your limbs might be chained together with links of steel.

"You are as safe from me as Satan himself," she cried, after a pause, "for I cannot injure you, but—you are as fast in the toils of duality, and as much my husband, as if a thousand ministers had said the words over us. I hate you for it, although my oath commands me to love you for it."

"And Nick Carter?" asked Chick. "What of him?"

"Nick Carter? He is dead to me, save in that he lives to become a victim of the most awful punishment that I and my followers can devise. I had not believed that I could suffer, and yet, were Nick Carter to undergo all the tortures of a thousand hells, because I sent him there, he would already have had his revenge upon me in what he has made me suffer by this subterfuge, and by the substitution of you for him."

"You're a wonder!" exclaimed Chick. "I don't suppose the devil himself can understand you, can he?"

"At least you cannot," she replied.

"I suppose you have selected a few very pleasant little tortures for me, haven't you?" he asked.

"I have already told you that it is out of my power to injure you now."

"But I don't believe that, you know."

"The only torture that is in store for you is in knowing that you belong to me, and that I am yours."

"And compared to that bit of information," replied Chick slowly, "hell looks like thirty cents."

"You think so?" she asked, smiling. "It is a pleasure them for me to know that, for in that case I will not suffer alone."

"Suffer alone?" cried Chick. "Can anything make you suffer?"

"Yes; your caresses will be torture to me."

"Then, by Heaven, if I had the strength I would pursue you now. If only I could make you suffer a few pangs, I think I would be content to suffer any of them myself; but——"

He paused, and she shook her head.

"You rave," she said, "for you know nothing of the awful power of Satan."

"Don't I?" said Chick.

"No. Let me tell you some of it."

"Do. I imagine you can tell it well."

"I am beautiful, am I not?"

"Yes; to look upon. As a burning city is beautiful. As a tornado is beautiful—from a distance."

"I know that I am beautiful. The power of Satan makes me so. You hate me now—or you think you do, and it amounts to the same thing. Now listen."

"I am listening."

"You are a prisoner here, and you cannot escape. I am a prisoner here with you, and I may not leave this place again for one year. This room and the room beneath it are your abiding place, and yonder, through that dome, is another like it where my parlor is. Every day we must pass the time together, from morning until night, here or there. We may not be apart at all, save when darkness falls and night settles over the earth. Do you comprehend that much?"

"I will, at least, say that I do; go on."

"Every day, every hour, nay, every minute of the time that passes while Satan wills that we are together, he will make me more and more beautiful. He will transform me into a siren of fascination, and, bit by bit, step by step, you will go mad with love for me, even though you hate me now."

"Well, I won't. You can bet your last dollar on that. I'm immune."

"I would that you were, but you are not. Little by little your strength will return to you, and while it is returning I will administer to you. Ere long you will listen for the sound of my steps when I come to you, and you will dread the moment when I must leave you alone again. It is the work of Satan, and he is a master workman."

"A master workman when he works through a beautiful woman; I will grant you that."

"Does he not always work so? Do you think that you can pit your puny powers of resistance against the powers of the devil?"

"I can try; and I can put up a fairly good bluff at it. Thank God I've got time to think while I am gaining strength."

"How many good men have fallen when Satan has sent a beautiful woman to dig the pit in their paths! And you will fall as they have fallen. Do you suppose if a thousand atomizers were spraying opium upon you from behind those flowers, that you could withstand for very long the desire to sleep? You know that you could not.

"And do you suppose that you, a man, can live here in this atmosphere, with the fragrance of these flowers around you, with the breath of this atmosphere upon you, with the lassitude of this place to corrupt you—do you suppose that you can withstand the fascinations which Satan will compel me to throw around you, the beauty which he will thrust upon you through me, the——"

She paused and threw back her head, laughing.

"You will be as a leaf in a storm," she continued. "You will be as a feather in a gale. You will be as the sand of an hourglass, slipping through as quietly and as surely. You will be as all men are, a weakling, a puppet, a mere tool to make more sure and more positive the handiwork of Satan."

"Blowed if I don't think you are trying to convince me that, although you are bound to make me fall in love with you if you can, you all the while hope that I won't. Eh? Is that the idea?"

She did not reply to him.

She left the hassock and crossed to the flowering plants again, and stood there with one of the blossoms pressed against her nostrils.

Then she turned and slowly retraced her steps until she was standing again over him.

And, looking up, he saw that her eyes were burning into his, that her lips were parted in a smile that had not been there before—those brilliant, red lips which suggested the vampire of legend to his imagination; and he shuddered.

And then she began to sink down nearer to him. Nearer and yet nearer, her hands resting upon his shoulders, and her face just above his own.

He wondered in that instant if she were indeed a human vampire, and if he had been preserved until that moment in order to gratify her awful appetite for blood, and then he remembered that in his weakened condition there could be very little blood in his veins.

But all the while her face sank nearer to his own.

And all the while he could feel her breath hotter and hotter against his cheek; and then she seemed to collapse upon him, against him. Her face pressed against his. Her lips touched his, and he started, almost in terror, struggling to force her away from him.

And then he could hear no more.

He fainted into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROUTE THE STRANGLERS TOOK.

It was late in the evening of the day when Gothmar and the two men with him forcibly took Chick from the detective's house, when Nick Carter returned to it, and he was alone when he did arrive.

He had felt some misgiving about leaving Chick when he had gone out on business which would not admit of delay, but there was an electric button within reach of the assistant's hand, and a maid to wait upon his every wish, and Chick himself had assured him that he was perfectly able to be left alone.

However, when Nick let himself into the house, he was immediately impressed with a sense of unusual silence about the place, and he went at once to the room where Chick had been seated near the window—his own study.

As we know, Chick was not there, and the detective, supposing for an instant that his assistant had asked to return to his bed, went at once into the adjoining room which had been prepared for his use.

But the bed was untouched.

He knew then, of course, that something of an unusual nature had happened.

To ring for the maid without first investigating the appearance of things on his own account he knew to be useless, for if the maid had been cognizant of any innovation in the usual course of things, she would have been the first to meet him at the door and to acquaint him with it.

Returning to the study, he crossed to the chair where Chick had been seated and picked up the book, now fallen to the floor, that had rested upon his knees when Gothmar entered the room.

It will be remembered that Chick had been gazing out of the window at the gathering shadows when he was interrupted, and that a book rested upon his knees.

Fortunately, the article that had been used by him for a bookmark was a short piece of pencil, and Chick, long trained by Nick Carter in the uses of adversity—and particularly that kind of adversity which came with their calling—had managed to make diligent use of the pencil.

Scribbled at random on the pages of the book, and almost illegible by reason of the difficulties under which they were written, were many words and names, and they were put down in a haphazard fashion without regard to sequence of meaning at all.

Nick seated himself in the chair and held the book before him.

"Poor old Chick!" he murmured. "Weak as he was, he managed to write these words here for me to piece together. Now let me see if I can get exactly at his meaning."

The words, as they appeared consecutively—and they were scattered over many pages of the book, as if the leaves had been inadvertently turned while he was talking with his captors—were as follows:

"Hindu . . . three . . . two door . . . Gothmar . . . strangler . . . cord . . . hum. hair . . . maid . . . murder . . . choked . . . Dazaar . . . free . . . Irma . . . husband . . . sent for . . . poisoned . . . take me . . . strangle you . . . auto . . . life . . . no danger . . . yourself . . . great danger . . . darkness . . . daylight . . . that's all . . . drop book . . . find it."

Such was the message which Chick had left behind him, written in the book which had slipped to the floor after he had finished writing it, and which he had evidently written at the time he was talking to the strangler.

And there was that in it which aroused the detective to immediate action in another way, and that was the reference to the maid and to murder.

It had not occurred to him before that the men who had attacked Chick might have done violence in the house before they took him away with them, but now he thought how probable it was that they had done that very thing.

He dropped the book, hastened down the stairs, and on through the lower floor to the basement.

Nothing had happened there, only the maid who should have attended upon Chick was not there.

Returning to the parlor floor, he entered the library, and there, lying back in one of the easy-chairs and breathing heavily, as if she had just recovered consciousness, he discovered her.

The story she told was incoherent, but reduced to a few words, it related simply that she had unexpectedly come face to face with a strange, dark man on the stairs, and that she had been so frightened that she fainted. More than that she did not remember, save that when consciousness did return to her her neck was very sore and lame, and felt as if somebody had choked her, and there was a dark-purple mark all the way around her throat.

And we, who know that Gothmar told Chick he had strangled the maid in the hall, will also know that only the fact that she fainted away saved her life.

There was no breath in her body to choke out of it when the terrible cord was thrown around her throat, and so, when the strangler removed it, there was really no harm done at all.

Having reassured her, Nick returned to his study, and once more took up the message Chick had so strangely left for him.

He copied the words he found there on a large sheet of paper, one by one, and in the order in which it seemed to him that they should appear for coherency of expression, and then with words which he substituted himself he began to fill in the blank spaces between them.

This work occupied him for a long time, for he had to make many erasures and many changes before he could make the message read as he believed Chick had intended it to do.

But, at last, after much labor, he produced the following—and the reader is requested to compare this production with the original in order to realize what it was that the detective accomplished. The words written in the book by Chick appear in capitals, and those supplied by Nick, in his translation, are in small letters—thus:

"A HINDU has appeared in the room without warning. There are THREE of them in all, and TWO remain near the DOOR, while the other one approaches —or attacks—me. His name is GOTHMAR. He is a STRANGLER. I know that by the CORD of HUMAN HAIR he carries. The MAID has been MURDER-ed by him; CHOKED to death by the cord. This man is sent by DAZAAR, who is FREE, and not a prisoner as you led me to believe. IRMA claims me for her HUSBAND, and has SENT FOR me. I have been so ill because I was POISONED by that pin with which I was stabbed in the struggle with Irma at the pit under the platform.* These men are to TAKE ME to her, and afterward they will return to STRANGLE YOU. They have a AUTO waiting. I think MY LIFE is in NO DANGER, but you are YOURSELF in GREAT DANGER. The time now is just between DARKNESS and DAYLIGHT. I must DROP the BOOK now so that you will—or they will not —FIND IT."

It will be seen by this that out of the thirty-eight rather disjointed words which the assistant had managed to scribble with his weak hand, Nick Carter was enabled to construct a fairly coherent message; and it will be seen also that in doing so he had arrived at the correct story of what had occurred in that room.

He knew that Chick had written down a word for everything he was told or could know from the men who attacked him.

He knew also that Chick would have asked them where they intended to take him, and that, if he had been told, he would have added a word as to his destination, to the others in the book.

But there was no such word there.

All that Chick had been told was that Irma had sent for him, that he was to be taken to her, that according to the ceremony of duality she looked upon him as her husband, and he asked himself:

"Has she transferred her affections from me to Chick, or is there something in the rites of their ceremony of duality which compels her to take him instead of me, now that their heathenish ceremony has been performed, and that Chick was the principal with her?"

We already have the answer to that question, but Nick Carter had not.

Yet, in referring back again to his interpretation of the message from Chick, he quoted:

"They will return to strangle you;" and "you are yourself in great danger."

"That would seem to settle the point," he mused. "Chick regards his own life as in no danger, although they have taken him away from here a captive, and, not long ago, to be a captive in the hands of Dazaar meant torture and death."

He left the chair then and began a close inspection of the room.

"This door into the hall was open," he mused, "and yet Chick did not hear a sound until they were in the room. Those fellows always tread silently, but they must have been mighty still in this silent house not to have made a noise which would have reached the ears of Chick. They would not go in their bare feet in this country, and they would not wear rubber on their feet, for it is against the rules of their sect to touch rubber. They would have felt soles to their shoes, of course, and—well, something should have clung to one of them to be dropped here."

He lighted every bulb in the room and began an eager search of the carpet.

Between the chair at the window and the door, he picked up from the floor these articles:

The half of a yellow, half-dried pine needle.

Two bits of heavy, yellow paper, not larger than the head of an upholsterer's tack, and shaped like the ace of clubs.

An infinitesimal particle of rotten wood not larger than the head of a pin.

A long, black hair, which evidently had come from the tail of a horse.

After he had discovered these things he procured his powerful magnifying glass, and began again, for already he felt that he was getting on the trail in a way he had not dared to hope to do, and there was one article which he now hoped to find which he was not likely to discover, save by an exceedingly careful and painstaking search.

"It would be strange," he mused, "if I should discover

* See No. 76 of THE NICK CARTER STORIES.

in this room the locality of the place they were so careful to conceal from Chick. The trail is getting warm, at least."

Then he bent with renewed zeal to the search, and added to the list above, he presently put down these articles:

Half a dozen cinders, such as would be thrown out by a locomotive burning coal.

Two small cinders from burning wood.

A little speck of coal ashes.

Two small particles of clay, one yellow and the other blue.

Half a dozen grains of white sand.

Another bit of yellow paper, this time shaped like a diamond.

This last was on the stairs outside the room, and, farther down, almost to the bottom, there was a bit of white paper, thick and heavy, and this was in the shape of a crescent.

On the floor in front of the door, which opened upon the street, he found two hairs, which, upon close inspection, he decided must have grown upon the mane of a St. Bernard dog, for there is no other animal which has hair like them, and outside on the steps was the best find of all, for it was the tip of a feather from the wing of a crow.

With this strange assortment of articles in his possession, he returned to the study, and there he arranged them upon a broad sheet of white paper before him.

His first act was to push the bits of paper to one side.

"These have been punched from railway tickets," he mused aloud, for he was alone, and he could concentrate his mind on the work in hand much better if he talked to himself while he arranged and classified the articles before him, "which shows that the men must have traveled on the cars to get here. Some of the particles punched from their tickets clung to their clothing, and, fortunately, they have dropped enough of them here to give me a most excellent clew.

"I know, for example, that their yellow tickets were punched by at least two conductors, which shows that they traveled some distance, and I know, by the bit that was punched from a white ticket, that not only was that done by another conductor, but that it was on a different train and a different road as well, and, more than that, it was a road under a different management from the other, else they would have purchased their tickets all the way through in the first place, and they would have been of the same color

"Now, the yellow tickets were punched by conductors who have punches shaped like a club and a diamond, and the white ticket by one whose punch was shaped like a crescent.

"I think that gives me a pretty good clew, for, as soon as morning comes, I can go to one railroad office after another, and ask for their returned-ticket department. It won't take me long then to get on the track of the right spot, for in every returned-ticket department I happen to know that there is a record of every punch that ever comes under their observation.

"Chick, my dear old fellow, I will know pretty nearly where you are before another sun sets, as sure as my name is Nick Carter."

CHAPTER V.

THE DETECTIVE ON THE TRAIL.

"Now let me see," continued the detective. "Let me touch upon each article I found—a little lightly at first, perhaps, and to be dwelt upon more at length later if necessary.

"The pine needle tells me what? Why, if it were a green pine needle, it would not tell me anything at all, for the reason that it might have been picked up almost anywhere. Such things are sometimes brought into the city by excursionists, and might even be dropped in a street car.

"But this is a dried one—a pine needle that is a season or more old. There is a little touch of pitch attached to it also, showing that it must have lain on the ground in close proximity to a cone; and that touch of pitch is what made it cling to the felt sole of the shoe on one of those stranglers.

"Being a yellow and dried pine needle, it was picked up by that foot where it fell from the tree, and that was, of course, in the country.

"Here is the bit of rotten wood. By its looks it was torn from a stump by a person's clothing brushing against it as he passed, so I will conjecture that these men passed through a piece of pine woods when they started for New York.

"Now, wherever the place from which they started may be located, I will wager that they keep a St. Bernard dog or two, and that one of those dogs was caressed by one of the men who came here after Chick, and just as they were on the point of starting out on their journey. The dog's hairs seem to prove that much to me, and prove it very clearly.

"There are crows around the house where they stay, too, and one of the men admires crows' feathers, for he has worn one of them, or a piece of one; which fate willed that he should drop here on my doorstep in order that I might know about his tastes. Crows' feathers do not grow in the city. Once in a great while one may be found in the park, but such occasions are very rare, indeed.

"Now, when they left the house to start for the city, they were obliged to drive to the railway station. The horsehair suggests that, and so do the grains of white sand, which appear to me to have been thrown upon the clothing by the turning of a wheel, and to have clung unseen to the back of a coat until it was dislodged because the man who wore it leaned against the jamb of this door under which I discovered it.

"Then we have the yellow clay and the blue clay. Now, yellow and blue clay do not, as a rule, mix. They are not found in the same clay bank. Neither are they found along the roadbed of a railroad which is well ballasted. But, in crossing a ditch near a roadbed the blue clay might have been picked up, and in climbing up on the grade to cross the road to an unimportant station, the yellow clay might easily have been encountered. At least, all these things taken together smell strongly of the country.

"The coal ashes also suggest the vicinity of a country station, but that is more strongly supported by the presence of the wood cinders; for wood is not burned on locomotives these days, unless that locomotive happens to pass through a country where time is no object, and where wood is very much cheaper than coal.

"That would only be true in certain remote parts of this State, in some parts of Pennsylvania, or in northern New England.

"Now, it isn't at all likely that they came from a remote part of New England, nor yet from as far away as Pennsylvania, so it is only reasonable to suppose that they did come from the northern part of New York.

"Next, we have the coal cinders, and they fit in with the punchings from the railroad tickets.

"That white punching, shaped like a crescent, came from a single cardboard ticket issued between two stations. I know that, because the paper is too heavy for a folding ticket, such as are detached at different parts of the route by the conductors as they pass the respective stations; but the yellow punchings tell a different story.

"They are from thinner paper, showing that they were punched from a coupon ticket; and a coupon ticket—supposing our men came in by the Hudson River road—must have been issued from a station above Albany or Troy, surely. Say, above Saratoga; that would account for the two different punches in the yellow ticket, the club and the diamond.

"That Hudson River idea is not a bad one, and is more than likely to be correct.

"Now what does it tell me, if it is correct?

"Why, I find that my stranglers came from some place above Albany; that they drove some distance to a station before they took the train; that they drove to the station from the direction opposite the side upon which the station itself is located, since they had to cross the track to pick up that clay; that they bought white tickets from that station to the end of that road, and that that particular road is no a part of the Hudson River system; and that it uses wood for fuel.

"I find then that they changed cars, and bought yellow tickets, but that they were some distance above Albany, because if they had been as far south as Albany or Troy, a single and not a coupon ticket to New York would have been issued.

"Now, it will be an easy matter for me to apply to the general management of the New York Central Railroad in the morning, and, through him, to learn very quickly about those punches, but, in the meantime, in order to assure myself that the general passenger agent is the right man to go to, I might pick up a little information about the automobile that brought the stranglers to my door."

Nick felt that there was nothing more to be accomplished that night in the dark; but as soon as daylight was an established fact the following morning, he was astir, intent upon losing no time in tracing the whereabouts of his chief assistant—but, more than all, determined to leave no stone unturned which would lessen the interval of time which stood between Dazaar and a prison cell or the electric chair.

With the aid of daylight, he made a second examination of the floor of the house wherever the intruders might have lingered even for a moment, but beyond the several articles already in his possession as described, he discovered nothing.

Next, he gave his attention to the outside of the house between the front door and the curbstone, where the automobile waited, while the stranglers went into the house to secure their victim.

But, although he searched diligently, he discovered only one article which might have a bearing upon the case, and that was a book of cigarette papers which had been dropped in the gutter directly in front of his door.

The only interesting feature of the book of cigarette papers was the fact that it bore the paster of a tobacconist, whose place of business was on Forty-second Street directly opposite the Grand Central Station.

"It stands to reason," mused the detective, "that there are thousands of men and boys in the city of New York, any one of whom might have dropped the book where I found it, but it is also reasonable to suppose that it was lost by one of the men who came here after Chick—lost while they were bringing him out of the house—crowded out of the man's pocket while they were lifting him into the automobile. At all events, I will make my first railroad call upon the general passenger agent."

The detective arrived at the office of the general passenger agent of the Hudson River road at nine o'clock, and found that he had just come in—and he was, of course, received at once.

"How are you, Mr. Carter?" exclaimed that most genial of men, extending his hand with great cordiality. "I see a whole basketful of interrogation points in your eyes this morning. What can I do for you?"

"I want to ask you a few questions about some punches," replied Nick, with his mind entirely upon the question in hand.

"Punches, eh? Going to enter the prize ring?" asked the general passenger agent.

"Well, hardly that. I refer to ticket punches, sir."

"Oh; I see. Not the solar plexus, eh?"

"It might amount to that for a certain individual, a little later on," returned Nick.

"Well, what is it you wish to know?"

"This: Yesterday, three men came into town, as I have reason to believe, from the North. They forgot to mention where they came from or where they were going, but they left these little things behind them, and I thought you might help me to determine where they originated."

As Nick spoke, he placed the bits of paper punched from the tickets on the desk in front of the general passenger agent.

CHAPTER VI.

DAZAAR'S CASTLE IN THE FOREST.

"Certainly," replied the general passenger agent, with an instant of hesitation. "Nothing could be easier." Then he turned to one of his clerks and called:

"Collins, ask Mr. Lewis to step here a moment, from the passenger auditor's department—the returned-ticket department." And then, while they awaited the arrival of Mr. Lewis, he said to Nick:

"Has there been a crime committed up the road somewhere?"

"No, but there is likely to be one or more, if the fellows, who carried the tickets from which these bits of paper were punched, remain long in the neighborhood."

"Indeed! Bad eggs, eh?"

"Indian stranglers," replied Nick.

"Stranglers! Well, that is a new one on me. But here is Lewis. He'll soon tell you what you wish to know. Eh, Lewis?"

"I'll try," replied Mr. Lewis. "What is it?"

"Can you locate these punches?" asked Nick, pointing

to them, where they were laid, upon a sheet of white paper, in front of them.

"I tell Lewis, sometimes, when I want to please him," said the general passenger agent, with a smile, "that I believe he knows every conductor's punch between Maine and California."

"Well, I do know a great many of them," rejoined Mr. Lewis modestly. "It is my business to know all that are connected with our road and its connections, and, naturally, from seeing them and studying them constantly, I learn a great many more."

"And do you know these, for example?" asked Nick.

"Perfectly," replied the superintendent of the returned-ticket office.

"Good! Would you mind telling me about them?"

Mr. Lewis glanced at the general passenger agent for permission to give the desired information.

"Give Mr. Carter all the information he asks for," said the general passenger agent.

"Very well," responded Lewis. "That diamond-shaped punch was made by a conductor named Simmons, who brings the early morning train out of North River, every day in the year, except Sundays."

"And where is North River?"

"Up near the headwaters of the Hudson; about a hundred and thirty or forty miles north of Albany. The club punches were made between Albany and New York, and, in order to make a continuous trip of it, there should be two other punch marks—an X and a spade."

"Good! My friends neglected to drop the X and the spade where I could find them," said the detective, "but I have no doubt that the punches were made in their tickets. Now about this crescent. What do you make of that?"

"It came from a little, narrow-gauge railroad up in that region. It is a road about sixteen miles long—that is, I think it is. It hasn't any particular reasons for existing, save for hauling lumber. It is individual property, owned by a lumber man in that region, and they have no regular time-table on the road. It is called Gregory's Road."

"I see, and is only sixteen miles long, you say?"

"Yes."

"Their locomotives burn wood for fuel?"

"Yes, of course. Slabs taken from Gregory's mills. They cost them nothing."

"Where is the northern terminus of this road?"

"Why, the mills. They are up in the mountains, almost due north from North River. The road, I think, follows the course of the Boreas River, and the mills should be somewhere in the neighborhood of Boreas Pond."

"Is it a wild country up there, Mr. Lewis?"

"About the wildest there is in that part of the Adirondacks."

"Have you ever been up there?"

"Why, yes. I went through there several years ago while on my vacation."

"Is there a hotel or a hunting lodge of any pretension in that locality?"

"No, but there is a strange sort of a building situated down in a cup in the mountains, which was built many years ago by a rich man, who wanted to live the remainder of his life as a hermit. He did live there, and died there, for that matter. Since that time the place has gone to ruin, I believe. It is called Peter's Castle."

"Why called that?"

"Well, Peter was the rich man's first name. Nobody ever did know his last name; and the house looks like a castle, with its towers and a big dome in the center of it."

"How far is it from Boreas Pond?"

"Not far. I don't remember exactly."

"Do I understand you that nobody seemed to own the property after old Peter died?"

"Yes, that's the idea."

"And it has been, up to the time you know about, deserted since then?"

"Yes."

"More than likely that is the very place I am looking for," said Nick, with a confident air.

"It won't be difficult to find in that case, for everybody within a radius of twenty miles around there can tell you how to find Peter's Castle."

"Do you know anybody around that region who is thoroughly trustworthy, who would act as a guide for me, if I paid well for the service?"

"Sure I do. I've got a cousin—that is, a sort of third or fourth cousin—who lives not far from there. He's a kind of backwoodsman. That is how I happened to be there myself. I went there to visit him."

"What is his name?"

"James Douglass. They call him Black Douglass around there, because he is as dark as an Indian."

"Can you give me a note of introduction to him?"

"Sure I can."

"And direct me so that I will have no difficulty in finding him?"

"Easily. I can wire to North River to have him meet you there."

"No, I prefer to find him myself. I don't care to publish the fact that I intend to visit that country just at this time."

"All right, sir. Is that all you want of me?"

"Yes, if you will prepare the letter and the directions for me."

"I'll bring them to you in twenty minutes, or, if the general passenger agent is willing, I will write them right here."

"Do so."

Mr. Lewis seated himself at a vacant desk and began his preparation of the letter and the directions.

"What is it all about, Mr. Carter?" asked the general passenger agent.

"Did you ever happen to hear of Dazaar?" asked the detective.

"Well, I should say I had."

"Unless I am greatly mistaken, Dazaar is at the present moment a resident of Peter's Castle."

"And you are going there after him?"

"After her."

"You don't mean to say that Dazaar is a woman?"

"Yes, Dazaar is a woman—at present."

"What do you mean by 'at present?' She can't change her sex, can she?"

"No; I don't suppose she can, but she claims to have been a man about a thousand years of time before she became a woman."

"You don't expect me to swallow that, do you?"

"Certainly not. In my opinion she is neither man nor woman; she is just a plain fiend."

"Either a man or a woman can be that, eh?"

"They might try. This particular person seems to have accomplished it to perfection."

"Good looking?"

"Yes, just as the lake of sulphur at the bottom of the crater of Popocatapetl is beautiful—at a distance."

"Hum! Not bad, that. Ah! Lewis, you have the letter ready, I see."

"Yes; here it is."

The letter, with full written directions accompanying it, were handed over to the detective, and, after thanking both gentlemen for the assistance they had given him, he took his leave.

"That is done," he said to himself, when he was again in the street. "To-morrow morning, unless I greatly err, I shall be in the neighborhood of Peter's Castle."

Arrived at his home, he at once called his assistants to his study.

"Now, attention, my lads," he said to them. "We leave on the two-o'clock train this afternoon, for a place called North River, among the foothills of the Adirondacks. I want you all to go with me, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, there will be some hot work for all of us before we return. Ten-Ichi, I want you, Patsy, and Pommery to fix yourselves so that you will represent my sons. I'll engage to look old enough to be the father of all of you. We're going for a little outing in the woods, and I have already engaged a guide, that is, I will have no difficulty in finding one when we get there, and, now, boys——"

"Yes, sir."

"We are going on a piece of desperate work."

"No worse than we had in Russia, was it, chief?" asked Pommery, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes; a thousand times worse and more dangerous."

"Good," said Pommery.

"Dazaar is there. I have no idea how many followers she may have with her, but I do know of three Hindu stranglers. We leave the Grand Central Station at two o'clock; I want you to be ready to start away from the house at half past one."

And thus it was that on the morning following the day on which Chick was taken away from Nick Carter's house, the detective had already discovered approximately to what place he had been taken; and yet we have just seen that Dazaar told Chick that a week had elapsed while he was still unconscious.

But a week had not elapsed. In reality only two days had gone by when Chick opened his eyes in the Orientally appointed apartment where he had the interview with Dazaar.

Doubtless she had her own reasons for wishing him to believe that he had been in her power a longer time than he really had been. She wished him to think that she had hidden him away beyond the reach of Nick Carter.

CHAPTER VII.

BLACK DOUGLASS AND THE CABIN IN THE WOODS.

It was just after dark in the evening of the day following the interview between Nick Carter and the railroad officials, when the detective, accompanied by Ten-Ichi, Patsy, and Pommery, left the train at a little station a mile and a half this side of the terminus of the narrow-gauge railroad which the superintendent of the returned-ticket department of the N. Y. C. & H. R. R. had described.

In other words, they left the train on the little narrow-gauge road before it arrived at Gregory's Mills, for the directions supplied to the detective by Mr. Lewis had contained the information that Black Douglass liyed about two miles this side of that point.

The conductor had been made to believe that the passengers who left the train at a station which stood alone in the woods, where was no house of any kind within a mile of it, were perfectly familiar with the country, and he had not thought it strange that a gentleman with his three sons should be intent upon taking a vacation by themselves in the heart of the woods, for it was at a season of the year when such a thing was to be expected, although it was rarely that tourists came to that particular section.

The four stood upon the narrow platform, and watched the diminutive train as it drew slowly out of sight in the darkness, and then Nick turned with a laugh to his companions.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked, speaking generally.

"Looks exciting," commented Pommery. "Reminds me of Park Row, it's so different."

"Everything closes at sundown here, doesn't it?" asked Patsy, with a grin. "Must have a new police commissioner who knows how to keep the lid down."

"The cool air and the mountains suggest Tibet," remarked Ten-Ichi sententiously.

"I think you will find more than that which is suggestive of Tibet, before we take the train on the back track," said Nick. "Now, lads, the place and the man I wish to find before I do anything else, is not very far from here, about a mile, perhaps, and off there to the eastward.

"The point is," continued the detective, "do you want to camp out here till morning and wait for me, or do you wish to go with me to find it?"

"I reckon we'll mosey along if it is all the same to you," suggested Pommery. "I'm not afraid of all the thugs in Baxter and Doyers Streets, after midnight, but I'll confess that this silence and the whispering of the pines gets on my nerves."

"All right," responded Nick. "Stand where you are a moment while I take a look around."

He pressed the button of his electric searchlight and commenced a careful examination of the platform and the ground surrounding it, stepping off the boards and crossing the tracks before he was through.

After fifteen minutes passed in this way he returned to where the others were awaiting him, and there was a satisfied smile upon his face as he said:

"It is always pleasant, after you have worked out a problem, to try it from the other end and prove it, eh?"

"Sure," responded Pommery. "That's what I told Tad, the sweeper, when I punched him in the nose and then kicked him across the street afterward."

"There is a bank of blue clay through this section, I find," continued Nick; "and on the roadbed, in dumping earth to fill in for the reception of the rails, there has been some yellow clay mixed with the gravel and sand. There are also some well-defined footprints in the clay across the tracks. This is all very satisfactory, my lads, because it assures me that I was correct in the deductions I made. Now, are you ready?"

"All ready, sir."

"Then come ahead. I don't think we will have any difficulty in finding the place we are looking for.

"There is a path through the woods," he continued, recalling the directions which Lewis had written down for him, "which leads directly to Douglass' cabin. Douglass lives there alone with his dogs and his guns, and if we shout 'Douglass!' with all our strength when we are in sight of the cabin, perhaps he will get outside in time to keep the dogs from eating us alive."

"How kind of him!" murmured Pommery.

Nick experienced no difficulty in finding the cabin of Black Douglass, for the path led directly to it, nor were they attacked by the dogs, for in reply to the first shout they gave, Douglass appeared at the door of the cabin with a candle in his hand and peered out through the darkness.

"Who is there?" he called.

"A friend of Bill Lewis, in New York," replied the detective.

"Bully for you and bully for Bill! Come in," called Douglass, in return, and Nick, followed by his three assistants, entered the cabin.

"Any more of you anywhere around?" asked Douglass.

"No," replied Nick, laughing and extending his hand. "This is the outfit."

"All the kids you've got, sir?"

"All I have with me at present," rejoined Nick.

"Likely looking kids. I guess I can give them a shakedown somewhere. Bill Lewis sent you here, did he?"

"Yes, read this letter, it will tell you all about it," and Nick extended the letter toward him.

"Suppose you read it aloud, will you? I ran away from school yesterday, and my glasses is busted."

"All right. Listen: 'Dear Jim——'"

"That's right. He's the only person on top of earth whoever calls me Jim. What's the rest of it?"

"'This gentleman is a friend of mine and a friend of my boss,'" continued Nick, reading. "'He's all right, and he wants to hire your services. He'll pay well for them. If you'll use him just the same as you would use me, I'll be eternally grateful. BILL.'"

"Correct, sir. Now, what's your name?"

"Nick Carter."

"Well, that's a good name enough, Nick. People around here call me Dug, when they don't call me Black. Either will do, one as well as the other. You're welcome. Have you had your supper?"

"Not a bite."

"Then I'll fry you a hunk of venison while we talk. What do you want to do? Hunt?"

"Yes, but not exactly the sort of hunting you are used to."

"No? Well, I'm used to most kinds. What particular sort of hunting do you want to do, anyhow?"

"I'll tell you about that presently. The first thing I want to do is to make terms with you, and I propose to make my own terms. For every day that you serve me you will receive, when I go away, ten dollars."

"Eh? What's that? Ten dollars for every day?"

"Yes."

"Gosh! How long do you expect to stay?"

"Several days. I can't tell just how long. I will stay until my work is finished."

"Well, you can stay a year, at that rate. I should have asked you two dollars a day, and considered myself well paid at that. Won't you go right on talking? I can be getting the supper while you talk, and you've got a way of saying things which I like to hear. I ain't heard anybody talk so pleasant since I can remember."

"How far is Peter's Castle from here?" asked Nick abruptly.

Douglass paused with the frying pan in mid-air and looked long and intently at Nick Carter, and then, in a voice that was strangely altered, he replied:

"Five or six miles."

"Is anybody living there now?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"I don't know."

"How many persons are living there?"

"I don't know."

"Well, about how many?"

"Might be three or four, might be a dozen, might be half a hundred, for all I know."

"You don't seem to be mighty enthusiastic about Peter's Castle?"

"Well, mister, I ain't, if anybody should happen to wake you up in the night and ask you about it."

"What is the matter with the place?"

"Nothing, as I know of. I ain't never heard that it had chills and fever or the dumb ague or the measles."

"Well, what is the matter with the people who live there?"

"I ain't axed 'em, and consequently, I don't know. They're a queer lot, and I'll confess that when you axed me about 'em just now, if you had said you wanted to go there with your kids, I'd 'a' told you to keep right along, right now, cause I ain't got any room under my roof and fig tree for any sort of animile that consorts with that crowd. What I don't know about 'em would fill a dictionary; and what I do know about 'em ain't any to their good."

"Suppose you tell me what you do know about them."

"It's mighty little. Peter's Castle hadn't had any inhabitants till they came here."

"When was that?"

"Between two and three years ago."

"So long ago as that?"

"That's what I said."

"And who came then?"

"Why, a lot of foreign niggers, I call 'em. Straight-haired niggers, and I ain't got no sort of use for a straight-haired nigger. The kinkier his wool is the better I like him. I didn't know that there was anybody there at all till I was out hunting one day and stopped at the spring up there for a drink. Then I saw some of 'em—and from that time on I've seen more and more of them from time to time, till I reckon I've seen a hundred."

"And do you think there are as many people as that there now?"

"No, I don't. I don't suppose there are more than a dozen or so, as a matter of fact; but there are others who are coming and going all the time, and in my opinion, they ain't any good. They're up to some deviltry of some kind, as sure as shooting."

"Well, Douglass, I think you are right about that, and it is what I came here to discover—just what that deviltry is—and I want you to help me find it out," said Nick.

CHAPTER VIII.

GETTING READY FOR THE ATTACK.

Nothing more was said about the expedition until the supper was cleared away and Douglass had lighted his pipe. Then Nick reopened the conversation.

"You say it was more than three years ago when you first noticed strangers at Peter's Castle?" he asked.

"Yes, two years and a half, or such a matter."

"And the people you saw then seemed to be foreigners?"

"Most of them. There were some who didn't look like foreigners."

"What did they seem to be doing there, and what do they seem to be doing there now?"

"Well, as near as I can make out they seem to be mightily busy doing nothing at all."

"And since that time others have been coming and going all the while, eh?"

"Purty near all the while, except in the winter when the snow is too deep for them to do much traveling in these parts."

"Do they come by the railroad?"

"No, only a few of them do that. They seem to drive in from somewhere. I ain't never took the trouble to trail 'em, so I don't know where they do come from, but it wouldn't take long to find out. They didn't bring their stuff in on the railroad, they carted it in."

"What stuff?"

"Blowed if I know; furniture and such, I suppose. I should think, all in all, they had more than a dozen carloads of it."

"Have you ever happened to see a beautiful woman among the people who are there or have been there in the past?"

"Have I? Well, I should say! I was waiting for that question. She's the queen bee in that swarm—you hear me! She's boss, and don't you forget it!"

"How do you know?"

"Well, I've got eyes—and I've got ears—and I've got sense—and I've got human understanding as well as a man's appreciation of what a beautiful woman can do if she has a mind to do it. I don't suppose there is a man living who could be around where there is a beautiful woman like that one, without letting her boss him. I wouldn't give much for a man who wouldn't.

"Say! she could boss me from now till kingdom come, if he'd—— No, she couldn't neither, by gosh!"

"Is she there now?"

"I guess she is. She came up on the train about a week ago, or a leetle more."

"You saw her, did you?"

"Saw her! Yes, and I've been seeing her ever since. Can't see nothing else but her, no matter which way I look. I happened to be at the station when she arrived, and she was all alone, so I toted her satchel up to the castle for her, feeling like a fool cause I done it. But, Lord! I couldn't help it, when she looked at me and asked me to do it. I just had to."

"Have you been there since?"

"Nope."

"Seen anybody from there, since?"

"Yes, twice."

"Who?"

"Three of them niggers I spoke about, with straight hair, you know, came down and took the train day before yesterday morning; and yesterday they came back on the same train you came on to-night."

"And they brought a fourth man back with them, didn't they?"

"They did."

"Were you at the station when they arrived?"

"Not exactly. I was near there when the train stopped. I saw them get off, but they didn't see me."

"What did the fourth man look like?"

"I couldn't tell very well, except that he was almost black, like the rest of them—and he was a sick man, too, for they had him on a cot."

"Ah! They had blacked his face to make people think he was one of themselves."

"Is that so? Maybe you know already who it was they brought with them."

"I do."

"Maybe that is why you are here."

"That's about the idea, Douglass."

"And maybe he didn't want to come, and you didn't want him to come, and you are going to take him away again without asking anybody's permission. Is that the game?"

"That is part of the game, Douglass; but only a part of it."

"Well, if I am going to work for you, would you mind telling me the rest of it?"

"Not a bit."

"Then let's hear it."

"The people in that house you call Peter's Castle are a set of outlaws. I am convinced, since I have talked to you, that they have made this place their headquarters ever since they have been in this country. They are not robbers, they are murderers, and the beautiful woman you saw is the worst one in the lot."

"You don't say so!"

"It is true. The man you saw them bring here on a stretcher is a friend of mine whom they abducted, and whom, when they are through with him, they intend to kill if he is not rescued in the meantime."

"Comfortable sort of an outfit, ain't it?"

"Now, Douglass, it is my business not only to rescue my friend, but to capture that pretty woman and as many of her followers as I can."

"I see."

"I want to break up the gang so thoroughly and entirely, that it will never take root again—and I want you to help me do it."

"Well, sir, I guess Black Douglass can do that."

"It will be necessary," continued Nick, "for me to keep rather in the dark for a day or so while I study the ground. I don't think my friend is in any immediate danger, and a few days more or less will not interfere with my work or his condition. On the contrary, he may be stronger and better for waiting, for he has been very ill, and after the journey here, he ought to rest. However, Douglass, I don't intend that he shall be obliged to travel back to New York right away."

"Why so? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I'm going to exterminate that gang so completely that there won't be another one of your straight-haired niggers left in this locality to bother or molest him."

"Bully! That's the way to talk. Partner, you're all right. Shake!"

They shook hands solemnly.

"Now, what's the orders, Mr. Carter?"

"We—these lads and myself—will lay low here to-morrow, in your cabin, while you do some reconnoitering for me."

"Correct. I can do that to the queen's taste."

"I'll get off this disguise, which I only desired for use on the way here, and the boys will step out of theirs."

"What's that? Get off what? Step out of what?"

"These disguises;" and Nick, by way of a practical demonstration, pulled the wig and the mutton-chop whiskers from his head and face, while his assistants at the same time divested themselves of wigs, et cetera; and all the time Douglass looked on in utter amazement.

"Bully!" he said. "You are detectives, ain't you?"

"Yes; I am Nick Carter, and these are three of my assistants. The prisoner up at Peter's Castle is another assistant of mine."

"Well, now," ejaculated Douglass.

"Haven't you ever heard of Nick Carter?"

"Can't say as I have, sir. You see, I don't read nothing, because I don't know how; and I am so far back in the woods that I don't hear no news to speak of, ever. But it don't make no difference who you are as long as you are Bill Lewis' friend. Now, go ahead with them orders."

"I haven't many more orders to give till I know more about the lay of the land."

"Well, I'll do the knowing of the lay of the land. You just let me do the seeing for you. Tell me what it is you want to do, and I'll tell you if there is a way to do it."

"I want to get inside that house and go through it from end to end and from top to bottom, without a person who is now inside of it suspecting that I am there."

"When?"

"The sooner the better."

"To-night?"

"To-night, if you think it can be done to-night."

"Ain't you tired out?"

"Not quite," laughed Nick.

"You jest want to do some looking around on this first trip, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And you're willing to leave these boys behind until the next time?"

"Certainly; I intend to do that."

"I only suggested it because two can travel so much stiller than five could. Are you stout in your arms? Could you go up a rope hand over hand?"

"Yes, and carry you on my shoulders while I did it," replied Nick.

"Honest?"

For reply, Nick rose from his chair, went around the table, and before Black Douglass knew what he intended to do, seized him and raised him high over his head, where he held him balanced on one hand. After a moment he replaced him on the floor, and resumed his chair as if nothing had happened; and Douglass stood gazing across the table at him with amazement in his eyes.

"Born that way?" he asked presently.

"Growed," said Nick, with a smile.

"Any more in the family like you?"

"Yes, that sick one up at Peter's Castle, when he's well, and on earth."

"Well, sir, I didn't ask to be inquisitive, but jest to suggest that if you didn't happen to have any brothers and wanted one, you'd take me on as an applicant. Gosh! Say, you're stouter than a moose. And, say, it's 'most ten o'clock, and if you are for going to the castle to-night, we'd better get a hustle on us.

"Boys," he added, "make yourselves to home. We'll be back about daylight, ef nothing don't happen to us. Come on, Nick Carter."

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE MERCY OF VAMPIRES.

The approach to Peter's Castle was sufficiently hazardous in daylight, but in the darkness of a cloudy night it would have been impossible to anybody less lynx-eyed than Black Douglass.

But he strode forward with never a misstep, and seemed to know his way and to see the path as well as if the sun had been shining upon it.

After an hour and a half of steady tramping and climbing, he came to an abrupt pause, and, in a whisper, he announced to Nick:

"Here we are. The castle is directly ahead of us."

The detective could discern a big, black mass, which looked like a darker part of the mountain, directly in front of him.

"Is that the building?" he asked.

"That's what it is."

"Are we in front of it, behind it, or where?"

"We're dead in front of it. You couldn't get behind it very well unless you stood inside the mountain."

"How are we to get inside the house?"

"I'll show you in a minute. Do you remember that I asked you if you could climb a rope, hand over hand?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's what you've got to do if you get into the house without their knowing it."

"Do what?"

"Shin up a rope. I'll show you. Come on."

He led the way in a wide detour around the house until they approached the cliff against which it had been built, and at a distance of about forty rods from the castle.

"There's a fissure in this rock," Douglass whispered. "It's mighty narrow and you'll have to crawl on your belly and squeeze through as best you can for a little way, after that it's wider and you can stand up and walk.

"Inside, there's a rope dangling from a ledge of rocks about fifty feet up, and behind that ledge there is a cave. Well, that cave takes us out where you can crawl out on the roof of the castle and look into the house through that glass dome. Then, when you get tired of doing that, I can show you a way into the house from the roof. I've been there before."

"Do the people in the house know about this fissure, the rope, and the cave?"

"I don't think so. If they knowed about it, they would have had it down long before this, I'm thinking. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

Everything occurred exactly as Douglass had explained, and after crowding through the fissure, climbing the rope,

crawling through the cave and so working their way down the side of the rock to the roof of the house, the guide led Nick to a spot where he had worked one of the prismatic sections of the glass loose so that it could be removed, and lifting it out, he motioned for Nick to peer inside.

It was only with a decided effort that the detective could suppress a cry of amazement when he applied his eyes to that opening.

The reader already knows what sort of a room it was into which he looked, for it was the same in which Chick had awakened that morning where the long and nerve-racking interview had taken place between him and Irma Plavatski, and where he had at last fainted from sheer exhaustion, due to the effects of it.

But now, many hours had passed since Chick had fainted from weakness under her ministrations. It was morning when that happened; it was nearly midnight now.

Nevertheless the scene upon which the detective looked down was none the less startling than that one might have been had he been permitted to see it.

He saw Chick, stretched upon the couch, as we saw him earlier in the story.

The assistant looked almost like a dead man, so pale was he; and he appeared to be sleeping—nor was it difficult to determine the nature of that sleep.

Even as Nick peered through the opening, Irma Plavatski was bending over her victim, and her hands were extended above him, as if she was still engaged in the work of forcing him into a hypnotic sleep.

Nick could feel a chill of horror creep along his spine as he watched the woman, for he had never in all his experience looked upon such a spectacle as this.

Her eyes were glowing like coals of fire, her lips were as red as the petals of a peony—blood-red, in fact—and almost repulsive in their brilliancy, and they were parted, showing her wondrous white and even teeth behind them, now somehow looking sharp and menacing.

And while he looked, she continued to sway over the couch where Chick was lying, until her motion reminded Nick of the swinging movement of a cobra's head before it is ready to strike.

Nor was that all which met his vision.

Dazaar and Chick were not alone in the room.

Around the couch where they were, drawn up in a complete circle, were sixteen swarthy men, all arrayed in their native garb, the flowing robes of the Orient, some with turbans on their heads, some without, and all were bending forward eagerly, watching the motions of the woman at the couch, while they chanted in a low tone words that were utterly unintelligible to the detective.

Nick Carter could see that Chick was totally unconscious, and he could understand also that Irma Plavatski seemed to be so enraptured with her occupation that she had forgotten even the presence of her followers.

That he had surprised them in the performance of some religious rite of the Devil Worshipers, Nick Carter had not a doubt; and that he was totally helpless to interfere in time to do aught to prevent what was to occur, he also realized.

"Whatever it might be, he must remain silent, and observe.

He could not have broken through the glass dome if he had tried, for he had no implement with him with which to perform such an act, and even if it could have been done, it would have availed him nothing, for he was forty feet above them, and—but why even consider the thought?

Then he almost uttered a cry of horror when he saw the woman suddenly dart forward, like a carnivorous bird upon its prey, and swoop down almost like one, upon the unconscious form of Chick.

He saw her bury her face in his neck and cling there as if she were indeed what she had told him she was—a vampire.

He drew his revolver and raised it as if to fire, but he hesitated to do so even then, and while he hesitated, the scene changed.

Irma suddenly raised herself from the recumbent position over Chick, and stood upon her feet again, and then she slowly turned her back upon him.

For a moment she stood facing her companions, who continued their low chanting, and then, waving her hands in the air, she approached them slowly while they as slowly receded, backing away from her, never lessening or increasing the distance between them, until they faded out of sight beyond some curtains which shaded a door at the farther side of the circular room.

When they had disappeared she paused for a moment and looked back over her shoulder toward Chick.

Then, suddenly, she darted toward the curtain, peered through and beyond it for a moment, and then turning again, she hastened back into the room and to the couch.

Again she bent over the form of Chick, but for some reason all the horrible aspect of her previous act had disappeared from her face.

Even the terrible red of her lips was gone. Had she wiped it away? Her eyes had ceased to glow as with a cruel fire. Her entire aspect was changed, and Nick watched her with a new interest, wondering what she was about to do now.

But he was not long left in doubt.

To his infinite surprise and amazement, she stroked Chick's forehead gently with her right hand until he opened his eyes and seemed to be in possession of all his senses again.

Then she leaned forward over him, and Nick almost directly above them, could hear her say, in a half whisper:

"You are better now, and you are rested. You will sleep well, and you will be better in the morning." And he heard Chick reply:

"I hope so."

"Do you think that you could learn to trust me after a while?" he heard her ask him.

"I don't know, Irma. You have certainly kept your word with me thus far.

"I can't protect myself," Chick continued, after a pause, "you know. I am weak, a prisoner, and in your power. You could drink my blood if you chose and I could not prevent it."

"Nor could I prevent it if they knew that I was deceiving them," she murmured.

"And did they think that I was unconscious, and that you were sucking the blood from the veins in my neck?" asked Chick.

"Aye, and they are waiting for me now to go to them. I must leave you. Good night."

"Good night. I wish you would let me say, God help you in your remorse. I will think it and pray for it, anyway. Good night."

She did not reply to him in words, but she bent for-

ward and pressed her lips against his forehead, after which, without a word or a glance toward him again, she left the room through the curtained doorway, and Nick could hear the closing and locking of a door after she had passed through it.

"What does it all mean?" he asked himself. "Has Irma Plavatski indeed repented, and is the fiendishness of Dazaar a thing of the past? It would seem so, for it is certain that she was practicing the art of the vampire, and that her followers believed she was performing it. I will know all about it before long."

He drew the section of glass still farther off the dome, and, pressing his face through the opening, called, as loudly as he dared:

"Chick, I am here to rescue you," called the detective. "Hush! Don't try to answer me," he continued. "Raise your right hand for yes and your left hand for no. Are you in any immediate danger?"

Chick raised his left hand.

"Will you be entirely safe twenty-four hours longer?" was Nick's next question.

The right hand was raised.

"Good!" said Nick. "I'll have you out of this to-morrow night. Now, look out, Chick. I'm going to drop a revolver on your couch. Get it and put it under the blanket. It may come handy to-morrow night. Good-by till then."

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST DEFIANCE OF DAZAAR.

Nick Carter did not deem it wise to risk the success of the venture that was to be made the succeeding night by an attempt to enter and reconnoiter the house then, and so as soon as he had warned Chick of his presence, he withdrew, accompanied by Black Douglass.

During all that day he remained inside the cabin of the guide with his assistants, laying out the plan of operation for the night, and instructing them in every act he wished them to perform.

There was not a move that could be made which he had not thought out and prepared to meet, and so, when night fell, they all awaited impatiently the moment for starting out for Peter's Castle.

A few moments before midnight found them assembled in the cave overlooking the castle, for it was a part of Nick's plans to gain admittance to the house, and to surprise the Devil Worshipers and vampires at the moment of the midnight hour, when they were all assembled in the room under the dome to witness the ceremony upon which Nick had chanced to look the preceding night.

The way into the castle was through the roof.

As has already been described, there were two towers and a dome to the castle, and in the space between one of the towers and the dome there was a scuttle, to which Black Douglass guided them.

This scuttle was not even fastened, and Douglass explained that long ago he had removed the fastenings, the probability being that the present inmates of the house did not even know of its existence, or if they did, had no thought of any person approaching the house from that way, since there was apparently nothing but the smooth side of the mountain for a pathway.

Nick Carter led the way through the scuttle, Ten-Ichi came next, then Patsy, then Pommery, and last of all, Douglass.

This was the order given by the detectives, who had received from Douglass a very good description of the interior of the house, and who felt that he preferred to have his own assistants close to him, while Douglass could do the scouting in the rear.

The entrance to the dome was on what should have been the ground floor, if the house had not been built on the precipitous side of a mountain. At all events, it was down several flights of stairs from the scuttle where our friends made their entrance.

They advanced stealthily, in their stockinged feet, for each one of the party had pulled black socks over his shoes in order that their feet might make no noise.

With unerring directness, the detective made for the entrance to the dome—the room where Chick was even now undergoing the ordeal of pretending that he was hypnotized while the woman vampire sucked blood from the veins in his neck.

It was horrible even to contemplate—horrible to think about, even though Nick knew that it was all a pretense, and that Chick would not be injured.

As he had hoped, the door behind the curtain which opened into the dome room was not even closed. It had been left ajar by the eager devotees, who, of course, had no thought or suspicion of possible interruption.

Perceiving this, Nick crept forward silently, at the same time motioning to his companions to hold back, for there was a soft light throughout the room so that objects could be dimly seen by them.

Stepping close to the curtain, the detective peered through at the scene within, which was a precise repetition of what he had witnessed the night before, and at almost the same stage of it, too.

Perceiving this, and realizing that there would be a good quarter of an hour or more before any of the followers of Dazaar would think of coming out of the room where they were so busily engaged in watching the ceremony, he drew a ball of heavy twine from his pocket and at once began to stretch it in every direction across the room, making it fast to the furniture and to everything which would hold it with sufficient firmness.

Length after length of it was stretched in this way, the nearest one to the door through which he expected the vampires to appear being more than halfway across the great room from it, so that there would be no doubt that every one of them would have passed from the dome before the attack commenced.

At the doorway, where the room opened into the hall, another heavy cord was stretched at a height where it would catch the neck of any person who attempted to pass; and this was done so that if one of them should attempt to escape and make a run for it, he would be caught at the door and thrown back with the force of having received a blow in the face.

If any one of you, my readers, has ever run against a clothesline in the dark, you will thoroughly understand the efficacy of this arrangement.

Next Nick stationed Ten-Ichi and Patsy, with Black Douglass on one side of the door from which their expected victims must enter from the dome, and with Pommery beside him, the detective took the opposite post.

Each one of them was armed with a section of heavy wire cable, covered with a piece of rubber hose stretched

over it. A terribly effective weapon, and one which is as silent almost as death itself—and quite as deadly, if the blow be hard enough.

Nick's instructions regarding that point had been:

"Strike, not too hard, but hard enough. Do not kill; but stun, even if you have to break heads to do it."

They could hear the low chanting of the devotees on the other side of the door while they waited, and then, suddenly it seemed to be coming nearer, and Nick raised one hand in warning to his companions, for the moment was at hand and the vampires were approaching, backing out as they had done the preceding night, with their eyes fixed upon their high priestess, who was deceiving them.

Nick hoped that it was their custom to back all the way across the outer room; he felt certain that they at least continued to back until the last one was free from the dome—and in this he was correct.

Presently the first of them appeared.

He was approaching with his back toward the detectives and their guide; his head was bowed low and his body was bent forward. The others, to a man, had assumed exactly the same positions.

Nothing could have played better into the hands of the detective and his desires for the conflict that was to come.

Drawing back ever so little, he watched the men with eager eyes until the last one—and he counted them as they approached—had passed through the door; and then——

The Orientals were startled into uprightness by the sound of a low whistle, and at the same instant, five distinct thuds, followed instantly by five more, and beneath the ten blows of which the thuds were the announcement, ten men went down as suddenly as if they had died in their tracks, on their feet.

To the Orientals, fresh from the orgy of their terrible rites, and attacked thus suddenly where they deemed themselves most safe from attack, it must have seemed as if righteous vengeance had fallen upon them out of heaven.

They seemed to be in a swimming circle of terrible clubs which fell upon them without ceasing, for the five men who attacked them each held two, and each one did its swift and terrible execution.

Ten of the devotees were down before they realized that they were attacked, and four more were down ere they could turn to escape by running.

Silent always, it never occurred to these men to shout, or to cry out in alarm, their only thought was to escape.

In the meantime Nick Carter and his companions were raining blows upon them with the speed of flashing lightning, and they were falling like grass before a scythe.

Fourteen were down and insensible; six remained still, and five of these six endeavored to escape by running, but before they had taken three steps they came in contact with the cords that had been stretched across the room in all directions, and they were sent sprawling upon the floor; and there the merciless clubs fell upon them without ceasing—upon all save one of the five.

He reached the doorway. He undertook to leap through it, but the rope that had been put there caught him by the throat, and he was lifted from his feet as if by a force from beneath, and hurled into the air to fall back again almost into the arms of Black Douglass, who quickly choked him into insensibility.

But there is still a sixth man to account for, and that person was Gothmar.

Gothmar, the silent, Gothmar, the terrible, Gothmar, the strangler.

Gothmar had not forgotten his avocation.

When the blows fell upon the heads of his associates, they somehow left him unscathed.

Instinctively he clutched his strangling cord, and drew it from his waist, where he carried it always.

With the same motion he threw aside the robes he had been wearing, and thus left himself naked, save for the breechcloth he wore about his loins.

He had no thought of flying—of attempting to escape. He smelled blood in the air, and he desired a victim.

As he turned to face his enemies, he saw one—Ten-Ichi.

Ten-Ichi was nearest to Gothmar, and Ten-Ichi raised his club to strike.

But the cord of the strangler was quicker.

It darted forward like a snake. It touched the neck of the little Jap.

It circled around his throat, and the lad could feel that he was in the toils of something from which there is supposed to be no escape when once it strikes its victim.

He knew perfectly well what it was, and—he knew how to defend himself from it. Knew how, as only a Jap trained in the muscular exercises peculiar to that country can know.

Instantly he dropped his hands to his sides and stiffened his muscles. Then he threw his head forward until the muscles of his neck swelled to thrice their natural size.

Thus he stood, fighting with his distended muscles the cord of the strangler. Thus he stood, when the Oriental ran against the rope in the doorway, and was hurled back into the arms of Black Douglass.

Thus he still stood, while Gothmar strained with all his brute strength upon the terrible cord, to choke his victim to death, and thus they were both standing when Nick Carter struck down his last man, and turning, discovered them.

Not three seconds had elapsed since the cord touched the neck of Ten-Ichi, but three seconds is an interminable time when there is the cord of a professional strangler biting at your throat.

With a bound Nick Carter was upon the almost naked Hindu.

He seized him by the throat with one hand, and by the breechcloth with the other.

Then, drawing himself back, he lifted the strangler clear from the floor, held him there, trembling for an instant, and then, with the force of a projectile from a catapult, he flung him across the room and against the wall of the house as if he had been a bag of meal.

Gothmar struck with a force that was terrible. You could have heard the bones of his body crack as he came in contact with the wall; and then he fell to the floor, bleeding, senseless, with arms and legs and ribs crushed and splintered.

And Ten-Ichi?

He raised his hands and coolly unwound the cord from his throat, looked at it a moment, folded it, and put it in his pocket.

"Never touched me," he said to Nick, smiling; "but I could not have stood the strain three seconds longer."

"Bind these fellows, Ten-Ichi, as I instructed you," said Nick. "Patsy, Pommery, Douglass, help Ten-Ichi."

Then he leaped to the door, pushed aside the curtains, and passed through into the room under the dome.

When he sprang into that room, he was in the act of darting forward toward the couch where he knew he would find Chick, when he was brought to a sudden standstill by the sight he saw before him, and he realized that for once he was in a position where he was helpless.

Chick was there upon the couch, just as he had seen him from the hole in the roof of the dome.

Behind the couch and facing toward the detective, stood Irma Plavatski.

She was looking toward him when he entered through the door, as if she had been expecting him, and there was a smile upon her face which Nick Carter could not define.

He could not tell whether it was defiance or derision that she intended to express, but what he did know was that she held in her hand the revolver he had thrown through the roof of the dome upon Chick's couch, and that the muzzle of it was pointing straight at Chick's heart.

For one brief instant he thought of trying one of his own wonderful snapshots in the hope that it would succeed; but then he thought that even if his bullet killed her, in falling she might press the trigger of the weapon she held, and thus kill Chick in spite of him.

And so he halted, stood perfectly still, and waited.

Presently she addressed him.

"You see I am waiting for you, Nick Carter," she said. "You see also that I am prepared for you. You realize that I could do you a great injury as I stand here, do you not? I could kill the man you love best in all the world —Chick. He is too weak to defend himself! so you understand, I could kill him—if I would.

"You realize, perhaps, that I could kill you also if I should raise the muzzle of this weapon ever so little and pull the trigger. You do not dare to shoot at me, fearing that you could not prevent me from sending this bullet into Chick; and you could not.

"For once I have the mastery over you, if only for a moment; but it is a sweet moment to me.

"Would you ask me why? I will tell you.

"Because I have it in my power to do you one favor which you will appreciate—which you will never forget. Do you know what that is?

"It is not to spare you; it is not to spare this man whom you love; but——"

She hesitated an instant, and then continued:

"It is to rid you forever of the worst enemy you ever had—thus!"

As she ceased speaking, she turned the weapon suddenly upon herself and pulled the trigger, and the bullet thus sped went true to its mark, piercing her brain; and as she fell, she toppled forward upon Chick so that her corpse lay directly across him.

And this, my reader, is the last, was the last of Dazaar.

That inexplicable character went to her death without a word of explanation, without an expression of remorse, and with a smile.

That she had somehow been in a measure transformed in character since the wedding ceremony she went through with Chick, is the only explanation of her conduct which can be offered. It is certain, however, that she was kindness itself to the young assistant while he was in her power at Peter's Castle, and he believes and will always believe that she had him abducted and taken there for the sole purpose of saving his life.

It is certain that he recovered and is now perfectly well, or he would not be editing these histories of the adventures of Nick Carter.

THE END.

"The Crime of a Money King; or, The Battle of the Magnates," is the title of the story you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 78, out March 7th. This case is one in which Mr. Carter himself takes a peculiar interest. It is one in which he controlled the whole financial system of New York and America for a season. Reading it will give you the real secrets of matters that have only been lightly touched upon in some of the recent financial investigations, and will show you the silent but powerful part played by the detective in an affair which might have spelled ruin for half the financiers in America.

Kit Keen, the Crook Catcher;

Or, THE KING OF THE KIDNAPERS.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER XVII.

KIT HAS A STORY TO TELL.

The young sleuth did not pause again in the lumber yard to read the letter that had been given him by Wilbur to carry to Miss Crandall.

He cared not for the memories connected with the pile of lumber and passed on.

But he soon found a retreat where he could be unmolested, and he halted and took the letter from his pocket.

It was not sealed.

He was surprised to discover that there was no mucilage on the envelope.

Luck certainly seemed to favor him in this, for he had seen Wilbur moisten it and the man had supposed it had been sealed.

"Now to see what he says."

Kit took the letter out of the envelope and read as follows:

"The bearer is faithful and I trust him, as you can. I have been broken-hearted over my act toward you and I can tell you what I dare not write. I wish to see you, and I must see you. Your father has forbidden me to come to his house, as he has taken a strange dislike to me, and you have also told me I should not come; but I must see you or I will not answer for what I may do to myself. I cannot stand much longer all that I am suffering. I implore you to meet me, and, if you will do so, answer by the messenger. Then I will have him meet you in a carriage and drive you to a quiet house, the abode of a dear old widow, mother of one of my clerks. There we can be safe and you can hear all that I have to tell you.

"Don't fail me, I implore you. Devotedly,

"HARVEY W——."

"The villain! Well, now, isn't he one to put behind the bars! And Mrs. Bent is the dear old widow—one old she-devil, she is. Well, I know just what I'll do, and if she does not take a tumble to what that fellow is, then I can do no more to help her out of a mighty ugly scrape. They say women won't believe any bad of one they love; but she looks sensible, and maybe she don't love him so hard, after all. She's had one show of what he would do, and I guess she'd like to skip another. The old man's onto him, that's sure, and I wish he was here; but no, I'll work it all out my own way."

Thus mused the young sleuth as he went along, his face wearing something of a worried look, for he was anxious as to just how Florence Crandall would receive all that he had made up his mind to say to her.

He was determined to save Florence Crandall—with her aid, if he could, without it if he needed to.

The elegant home was reached, and, to his delight, Kit discerned Florence in an easy-chair on the piazza, in a quiet nook, all alone.

She saw him ascend the steps and had no idea that the smart-looking messenger was the young man whom she had before seen in the disguise of a bootblack.

She called to him to come to her, and, touching his cap, Kit said:

"I have a letter for Miss Florence Crandall, miss."

"I am Miss Crandall."

"It is important, and I was to place it in Miss Crandall's hands, and where no one could see me, miss."

"I am Miss Crandall, and none of the servants is within hearing."

"Here it is, miss, and it was given to me unsealed; but," and he whispered, "I know just what the gent wants you to do."

The sweet face of Florence Crandall flushed, then paled, and she read the letter with changing expressions, Kit watching her attentively the while.

"It is strange that Mr. Wilbur should ask this of me, for you say that you know what his wish is."

Kit looked about him quickly, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

"Yes, miss, I do know. He says you can trust me, and you can, for I am your friend, not his, and I want you to know all I can tell you about him. Then, if you still trust him, and will not believe me, I have done my duty by you, and I shall see that he does you no harm. Will you trust me, miss?"

Florence Crandall had risen as the young detective spoke, and at first was indignant; but there was such an honest appeal in his look and words that she was deeply impressed.

Resuming her seat, she said coldly:

"Mr. Wilbur said you were to be trusted—what have you to say?"

"Trusted by you, miss, but not by him, for I am your friend and his foe."

"What have you to say?"

"Would you trust the feller who saved you the other night when you were kidnaped?"

Miss Crandall became very white, her lips quivered, and she asked:

"What do you know?"

"I am that feller, miss."

"You! yes, I know your voice now, and recognize you, though I had but an indistinct view of you then."

"Do you not know me also, miss, as the bootblack that took your note to Mr. Wilbur?"

Slowly she said:

"Yes, I believe I do—yes, I know your eyes. Do tell me what all this means, for I am dizzy trying to understand."

"It means, miss, that the man you have trusted has deceived you, and he is trying to get you into his power, to force your father to buy him off for big money. He is a villain, miss, and I will prove it to you, for I have a good deal at stake as well as you have, for you remember that a man was killed the other night in his struggle with me, and I have kept the secret for your sake and for my own. Will you listen now to all I have to say, miss?"

The lovely face had lost every atom of color, the lips were set, and with an effort she said:

"Tell me everything—I must know all, and now."

CHAPTER XVIII.

KIT SETS HIS TRAP.

Kit Keen could see how deeply moved Florence Crandall was; that she seemed to dread some terrible blow to fall upon her, and which she was dependent upon the young man alone to save her from.

His manly, honest, and intelligent face gave her confidence in him, so much, in fact, that she did not count his years, especially when she recalled how he had saved her from her kidnapers and also had kept her name out of the papers.

"Sit down, please," she said, pointing to a chair near.

Kit did so, leaned forward, and in a low voice began his story in a way that gained her confidence by telling her about his sister, and how he had, after two years' search, found her and kept her life from being wholly wrecked.

"That work got me on the secret-service force here, miss, and the detective chief calls me his young sleuth—see, here is my badge—and I had just come back to Chicago the night I heard your cry for help."

Then the young detective told of how he was determined to track her kidnapers, and the way in which he went about it, making the discovery through her letter to Harvey Wilbur, and which, he frankly confessed, he had read.

His visit to Mrs. Bent came next, and all that that woman crook had let him know, with the plot to force her, Florence, into a marriage with Wilbur, which would give him a hold upon her life her father could not easily sever.

About the degenerate preacher who was to have performed the ceremony he also told her, and then of his visit to Wilbur the night before, leaving his dog there, and next his recent call, in which the man believed he had come direct from Mrs. Bent and at once entered into another plot to get her, Miss Crandall, in his power.

"Now, miss, I have told you my story, and I want your help to prove it all to you. I can pinch Wilbur, as a kidnaper, and the pal of Saul Bent; but it might force you to appear, and that I do not want, nor does the chief, so my plan is for you to send a message, not a letter, by me to meet you at a certain place——"

"No, no, no! I will not——"

"You are not to go, miss, but I want to get him away from his place, for I am sure he has no clerk or servant there, and, while he is gone, I'll go there and search his

rooms, for I saw your photograph there last night, and know where he put your letter the other day."

"Yes, yes, he has three photographs of mine, and a number of my letters—oh! can you, will you get them for me?"

"That's just what I intend to do, and before the police go to his rooms, for then there's nothing to show and bring you into the game—I beg pardon, miss, I mean the trouble."

"And you will do this for me?" asked the girl, in a voice full of emotion, while her eyes were filled with tears.

"You bet I will, miss, for it's to be a clean break from that crook."

"Let me tell you that Mr. Wilbur came to Chicago several years ago, and, as he seemed to have money, he made acquaintances, got into society, and I met him. He was always most gentlemanly, had traveled much, was entertaining, handsome, and—well, I suppose I was fascinated with him, for now I feel that it was not love, as it will not hurt me much to give him up, now that I know he is what you have shown him to be. Yes, you have saved me from making a false step that would have wrecked my life, and God bless you for it! The other night I went out with him for a short drive; he had a box of candy, and now I know that it was drugged, for I lost consciousness soon after getting into the buggy, and—he picked that man up somewhere, and—I became conscious just as they lifted me out to carry me into the house. You know the rest."

She had spoken rapidly and earnestly.

In answer to Kit's request that she would appoint a place to meet Wilbur at the Confederate Monument in Oakwoods Cemetery, as it would take him some time to go there, and, after waiting there an hour, if she did not come, he was to go to an address where she would be, if prevented from going to the cemetery, Miss Crandall said:

"My fate is in your hands, my very brave young detective and good friend, so tell him what you please to get him away from his home, and I depend upon you to get my letters and photographs."

"I'll not disappoint you, miss. I'll fix it all right, never fear, so you will not be known in it, and he will have troubles of his own in looking out for himself."

Having gotten his plans arranged to his own satisfaction, Kit took his departure, Florence Crandall warmly grasping him by the hand and saying earnestly:

"Now, remember, Kit Keen, you have a man's work on your young shoulders, but I have faith in you. Now that I know that man's plot against me, I hate him."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLOT.

Back to the home of Harvey Wilbur went the supposed messenger, and he found the man anxiously pacing his office, while Satan lay upon the floor, evidently watching for the coming of his young master and evidently wondering why he was left for so long a time in strange quarters.

But if he could have said so, Satan would have had to say that he had been treated right royally.

"Well?" said Wilbur eagerly, as Kit came in.

"I saw her, sir, and gave her your letter."

"And you have a letter for me in reply?"

"No, sir, she was not able to write you, but she told me to say that her parents had not yet returned from Detroit, but she expected them day after to-morrow."

"Then there is no time to lose."

"No, sir."

"Will she meet me?"

"She wished you to go to the Confederate Monument in the Oakwoods Cemetery at four o'clock to-morrow and wait for her."

"I'll be there."

"If she does not get there by five o'clock, you are to go to this number, a cottage in Hyde Park, where a friend of hers lives."

"I see; but she may be unable to go to Oakwoods, then."

"There are reasons that may prevent her going there, and, if she is prevented, then go to the address on the card I gave you."

"I will, and I understand fully; but I wish you to go to Mrs. Bent's and tell her to prepare for a lady guest, and to have her clergyman friend there for to-morrow night, between eight o'clock and midnight."

"I'll go, sir, but you had better write her a note, for she will want more than my word for it."

"All right, I'll do so," and the note was written, sealed, and handed to Kit, who then said:

"I will then have to go and report my time and pay up, saying I will be needed to-morrow, I suppose."

"Yes, for I wish you to take another letter to Miss Crandall to-morrow morning. Now I will give you the money to pay up your time."

"Thank you, sir; but won't you please figure it out on one of your letterheads, so they will understand it?"

Harvey Wilbur was in a very good humor and did as requested, handing Kit a liberal fee for himself.

This done, with a pat on the head for Satan, Kit took his leave and he made his way direct to the home of Mrs. Bent.

He found the woman busy cleaning up after the funeral, and he told her what she was to do, but did not give her Harvey Wilbur's letter.

He needed that for another purpose.

"He wants you to write him word if you will have all ready for the young lady's coming, the preacher here waiting, and just what your bill will be."

"I'm a poor hand wid de pen since I was afther hevin' rumatiz, an' you be ther one to write that same fer me an' I'll be a mither to yer."

Kit thanked her for the honor she wished to bestow, but told her he had to report at the office and would call for the letter in an hour.

So he left her sitting down to perform the task of writing a letter, while he went out to telephone the detective chief that he would call there soon, and it was most important to see him and please to have Officers Danvers and Keefe there also.

Then the young sleuth enjoyed a hearty meal, for he seemed well satisfied with the work he had done thus far.

Returning to Mrs. Bent, he found the woman folding up her letter, and she asked him to read it and "see if it was not afther bein' a gim."

It was a curiosity in its way, and a very labored letter, but it at least suited Kit's purpose, and that was all that was necessary.

Going to the secret-service headquarters, he found the chief awaiting him, while Detectives Danvers and Keefe were in the adjoining room.

The letter of Harvey Wilbur to Mrs. Bent, his figuring out of the supposed messenger's time, the money given him by the kidnaper, and Mrs. Bent's familiar letter to him were all placed before the chief, who read them carefully, and said:

"Splendid! Kit, you have evidence here of their plot of deviltry, enough to send them to prison."

He touched the "buzzer" for Officers Keefe and Danvers, and upon their entrance, called out:

"See what this young sleuth has done—and he needs your aid in trapping several kidnapers to-morrow. Now, Kit, tell them what you have done, and let your plans be known."

Kit spoke of Harvey Wilbur and his plot to kidnap a young lady, force her into a marriage with him, and of his accomplices in Mrs. Bent and a man who had once been a preacher, but had gone to the bad.

"Now, a plan has been arranged that Harvey Wilbur," said the young sleuth, "should meet this young lady in Oakwoods Cemetery, and, if she did not get there within an hour, to go to my little home in Hyde Park, for this will give the chief and myself time to visit his rooms and learn more about him.

"Of course, the young lady is not to be at either place, but you two officers will be at my cottage, for I will wait for you and let you in.

"Then, when Harvey Wilbur comes, you are to arrest him and hold him until night, when you are to take a carriage and drive him to the jail.

"This done, the chief and myself will join you here at headquarters and go with you to Mrs. Bent's.

"Is that the plan, sir?" asked Kit, turning to the chief.

"Just as we arranged it, Kit, but to you belongs the credit of it all, and I am sure there will be no hitch in carrying it out," was the answer, and the ferrets left for their homes, to meet the next day, the young sleuth spending a very lonesome night in his little cottage without Satan to keep him company.

CHAPTER XX.

KIT STRIKES IT RICH.

Officers Danvers and Keefe had arrived on time at the cottage, and Kit let them in and showed them his little home.

To Officer Dave Keefe he gave a disguise as an old woman, for he was to let Harvey Wilbur in and ask him to be comfortable, when Officer Danvers was to come in, and, covering him with his revolver, was to arrest him.

Leaving the two officers in charge, Kit went to the home of Florence Crandall, again dressed as a messenger, but carrying with him a large dress-suit case, apparently well filled.

Miss Crandall saw him coming and met him in the quiet retreat on the piazza.

He handed her a letter that Harvey Wilbur had given to him for her that morning, and she read it with a sneer upon her handsome mouth.

It was full of protestations of his love for her, and begged that after meeting her, as appointed, she would drive with him to the house of a poor woman who was ill, and who was the mother of his clerk, for she needed sympathy from just such a sweet girl to cheer her up.

"Keep that letter, miss, for the chief will not use it, as it would fetch you into the trouble," said Kit.

Then he handed her, to read, Wilbur's letter to Mrs. Bent, her remarkable epistle in answer, and the report of his, Kit's, time to the supposed manager of the messenger boys.

Kit wished to let her have full proof of Wilbur's villainy and treachery to her.

Miss Crandall bit her lips and her eyes flashed, while she said aloud:

"Scoundrel!"

Then Kit departed for the office of Harvey Wilbur, for he had been told to come back and report, and having his trap set all ready to spring, he wanted to tell him he need not go to Oakwoods, but direct to the cottage in Hyde Park.

Dressed in his best, and with a slouch hat drawn well down over the plaster strips on his forehead, Harvey Wilbur was impatiently waiting Kit's return.

"There is nothing wrong?" he called out, as Kit entered the office, silencing with a word Satan's greeting of him.

"All is lovely and the goose hangs high," joyously answered Kit, and he added:

"She's docked the cemetery meeting, and you are to go direct to the Hyde Park address."

"Good! But what have you in that case?"

"Some goody-goodies, jelly and fruit and wine and a gown and other things for the poor sick lady you wrote her you wished her to go to see with you."

"The dear girl! she belongs to the Society of the King's Daughters, and is always doing good; but she will go with me, then, without trouble?"

"You bet your sweet life she will; but can I stay here with the dog until you get back, Mr. Wilbur?"

The man did not answer at first, then said:

"I shall not be back until late, for, after Miss Crandall has become Mrs. Wilbur—and she must marry me, and I'll see to it that she does—I shall drive her back to her home, for, when she is my wife, I can bring the old man and woman to terms.

"You did not give Mrs. Bent any hint as to who the young lady was?"

"No, siree; I knows when to keep my hash trap shut; but I told them at the office you would need me a couple of days, and I've got no place to go, so please let me stay here," and Kit added to himself:

"I'm getting to be a boss liar, I am, and Satan knows it, and looks ashamed of me."

"I would like to, my boy, but I have dismissed my clerks, and you cannot stay; but I'll give you some money to go to the theater and stay at a hotel, and you can come here to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," and Kit stood with his hand on the door as Harvey Wilbur closed up his rear office, and, leaving Satan in the front one, was ready to go to keep his most important engagement.

Kit wished to help him, and closed the door after him, when the two walked to a livery stable and Harvey Wilbur took a carriage that was all ready awaiting him.

Kit watched him out of sight and then returned to the real-estate office.

He had quietly fastened back the spring, and the door opened readily, and Satan seemed overjoyed at his return.

Soon after, a form was seen walking rapidly toward the office.

It was the detective chief.

"Well, Kit, as usual you have managed it well; I saw him go from the stable."

"Yes, sir; and no one is here, so we will get to work," and Kit took some skeleton keys from his pocket, opened the rear door, and went to one he had seen Harvey Wilbur enter when he went upstairs.

Up to the floor above they went, and Kit's first act was to take possession of Florence Crandall's photographs, and, opening the desk in the handsomely furnished room, he found her letters.

These, with the photographs, he put carefully away and looked about for any other article that might belong to the young lady.

He found nothing more, but he did find a bunch of strange keys.

Then the detective chief set about finding doors they would open.

A dumbwaiter in the lower hall was found, and it appeared to be a closet, which a key on the bunch opened.

This closet concealed, back of the dumbwaiter, a narrow flight of stairs leading to the cellar.

A lantern hung there, and, lighting it, the two ferrets found themselves in a tunnellike basement, with a door in the rear.

This a key was found to unlock, and Kit called Satan and sent him ahead.

It was a narrow corridor underground, and it led for over a hundred feet, where there was another door and a pair of narrow stairs.

At their head was a heavy door, covered with zinc.

It was opened, and the chief and Kit entered a large hall, with a large skylight overhead and rooms opening upon it.

To these rooms there were iron doors, and looking out of the grating of three of them were human faces.

"My God! Chief, what does this mean?"

"Kit, you have struck it rich!" cried the chief, and he was all excitement.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE KIDNAPER KING.

They had found a private prison, and it was certainly within the walls and in the top of the large storehouse spoken of as being in the rear of Wilbur's real-estate office, and upon the grounds.

But who were the three occupants of that strange prison?

One was a man well along in years, with a pale, haggard face.

A second was a young girl of nine, a frightened-faced child.

The third was a boy of thirteen.

One room door was open, and upon a bed, asleep, was a negro woman.

But she was not a prisoner, as the others certainly were.

The woman was aroused by Satan sniffing in her face. She thought it was the real thing, the devil in reality, and she gave out one African yell that would have discounted an Indian brave.

But the chief soon had her fast, and, with teeth clinking together in fright, and her face of a greenish-gray look, she told her story.

One prisoner was a rich man who had been kidnaped by Harvey Wilbur, and was being held to force him to pay an enormous ransom.

The little girl was another victim of the kidnaper, the daughter of wealthy parents, of whom a fortune was demanded.

The boy was also a kidnaped victim, held for ransom.

The negro woman was Wilbur's servant, the only one he kept, who was in his secret and under big pay.

Clerks he had but one, who was seldom kept in the office, but busy on outside work.

The three victims of this kidnaper king were released from their rooms and told that they should return to their homes as soon as night came on, and they were happy.

They had been given the best of food, good attention, books, and other things to entertain them, but they were made to understand that they were worth a fortune to Harvey Wilbur.

Made to tell all she knew about her master, the kidnaper king, the negress said that she guessed he was crazy on the subject of kidnaping, and had gotten other victims there and forced money from them; for, as they were brought there drugged and taken away blindfolded, they never knew where they had been imprisoned.

The negress did the marketing, and all went well, as Harvey Wilbur had some business and was never suspected as a kidnaper or a crook.

"He done fell in love with some gal, he told me," she said, "and he say if he could make her marry him so he c'u'd git her money, then he w'u'd skip off wid his wife an' his fortin whar nobody ever c'u'd fin' him; but I guesses he won't go now."

"I guess not," dryly said the chief; while the young sleuth asked:

"Who was the lady he wanted to marry, auntie?"

"Dunno, chile, I dunno; for he don't tell much."

The chief explained to the three victims of Wilbur's love for gold that he would leave them there until night, free, but not to attempt to leave, while the negress was locked up, and he and Kit departed, returning the way they had come, Satan having been left on guard in the office.

"Now to headquarters, Kit, and I'll have officers ready to take charge of Wilbur's office and hidden prison as soon as I have had a talk with the superintendent of police and told him what my young sleuth has done, and more—that you have found the very three victims whom we knew had been kidnaped, but could find no trace of. It was these very people I wished to put you on to find what had become of them, and you have done it in one strike. Now, about the raid on Mrs. Bent's?"

"Well, sir, in this dress-suit case I have a full girl's rig, and I will put it on and play the girl, going to Mrs. Bent's with Officer Keefe and Officer Danvers, as pretended friends of Wilbur's, and see just what the woman and her preacher friend will do."

"The very thing, Kit, for you'll make a very pretty girl."

Later, the chief repeated the compliment with enthusiasm when he saw the young sleuth all dressed up as a girl, for he made a very handsome one, and showed himself an artist in disguising himself.

Without a hitch, Kit Keen's plot had worked to the end, for Harvey Wilbur had been captured by Officers Danvers and Keefe when he went to the cottage, and later the same two officers had gone with the young sleuth, disguised as a young girl, and Mrs. Bent and the preacher had shown the cloven hoof and been made prisoners, the woman's home being discovered to have been long a secret meeting place for crooks.

To jail the four went, for the negro woman kept them company, and to-day they are safe in the prison at Joliet, sentenced to the full limit, though they pleaded guilty and saved the city the cost of a trial.

How they had been run down they never knew, for the detective chief kept his young sleuth unknown, to have him serve him in other remarkable cases against the crooks of Chicago, and Kit still kept his little home, and Satan as his pard.

The name of Florence Crandall had not been known in the affair, and Wilbur had wisely remained silent about her, thinking she was unknown as an intended victim, and thus saving further trouble for himself.

That she appreciated how she had been saved by the young ferret, her actions toward the brave young detective spoke louder than words could have done, for Kit received a deed one day making him the owner of his cottage and two adjoining lots, and she had it put in good repair and most comfortably furnished, for she would allow no refusal to do as she wished.

To-day the young sleuth, unknown save to the secret-service force, is winning fame by his deeds, and the detective chief calls him his "Right Bower."

THE END.

SILAS SWAN, THE SWITCH TENDER.

By NATHAN D. URNER.

During the Civil War, when east Tennessee had virtually passed into the hands of the Union forces, the Ohio & Tennessee Railroad, with its branches leading to Knoxville, Chattanooga, and other points, was almost constantly engaged in carrying bodies of troops and war material from one depot to the other, and was, therefore, indispensable to the continued occupancy of that portion of the country.

The Southern sympathizers—and they were many even in that loyal section—knew this well enough, and their favorite mode of harassing the invaders, as they were wont to term the Union soldiers, was by obstructing this important railroad.

Though weak in numbers and not daring to attack openly, it required but little courage to displace a rail, lay a log of wood across the track, or break a switch, by either of which a rushing train, laden with munitions of war, or still worse, packed close with soldiers, might be hurled down one of the steep ravines or precipices which abound in that mountainous region.

To be sure, the road was guarded as well as possible, small bodies of troops being placed here and there at regular intervals, but there was many a lonely spot along the line, many a wild mountain pass, or dense forest, where the cowardly "road cutter" could carry on his operations with impunity.

At the time of which I speak there dwelt at L—— Junction, ——, a point about sixty miles west of Knoxville on the main line, one of the railroad employees, named Thomas Swan, whose business it was to attend to the switching of the rails at that important point—for the main line was here intersected by two crossroads, which were in use almost as constantly as the trunk road itself.

He was a stanch Union man, was one of the oldest and most trusted men in the employment of the company, and, for a distance of over one hundred miles, knew every inch of the road as well as a beaver knows his trail.

He lived all alone with his aged wife, and his little grandson, Silas, a likely, black-eyed lad of about fifteen years, and small for his age.

Though perfectly isolated, "Swan's Cabin," as the house was called, was a sort of rendezvous for the folks round about, inasmuch as he dispensed liquors and ale, and was in the habit of dignifying his humble dwelling, now and then, by calling it a tavern. Of course, the frequenters of the cabin were mostly Union men, but the numerous Southern sympathizers of the neighborhood did not scruple to go there as well, and as long as they held their peace, conducted themselves in an orderly manner, and paid for what they had, old Swan had no objection to their coming.

At the particular time of which I speak, the Union forces were rapidly concentrating at Knoxville, preparatory to making an advance southward.

Troops were being hurried in from all quarters, but more especially from the Western part of Tennessee—now almost altogether deserted by the enemy—every wheel of available rolling stock was eagerly seized, and the trunk line and its branches fairly groaned with the pressure of travel that swept over the ringing rails.

One bitter cold evening, when old Swan had been busy on the road all day, as train after train, crowded with soldiers, passed the Junction, a number of rough characters were lounging around the great fire that blazed and crackled in the chimney place of the largest apartment in the cabin, which answered as the taproom of the "tavern." They were farmers and farmers' sons, with here and there, like enough, a deserter from the Confederate army, all of them rude and uncouth enough, and the military movements of the hour formed the general topic of conversation; as a matter of course, though after a very crude fashion, as one might readily guess, from a people among whom newspapers and the wonders of telegraphy were a rare novelty.

Old Swan, looking ruddy and hale enough after a long day's exposure to the bleak mountain wind, was dealing out apply brandy from behind the long table which answered for his counter, his wife was cooking in the adjoining room, and little Silas was sitting in the chimney corner, half asleep, for he had been out in the wind with the old man nearly all day, and was very drowsy as the strong heat of the fire crept genially to his benumbed, poorly clad frame.

Silas paid no heed to the loud talk that was going on around him, but his attention was presently attracted to the singular, half-whispered converse of two men sitting near him.

He was a shrewd, wide-awake little fellow at all times, and now, without moving his head, and glancing out at the corners of his eye, he recognized one of the speakers to be a young man named David Darrell, who had sev-

eral times been placed under the strictest surveillance by the authorities. The other man he did not recognize, and concluded that he must be a spy of the enemy, or something of that sort, as he appeared to be in thorough sympathy with the other.

Silas gave no signs of having been aroused from his dozing condition, and the conversation went on in the same whispered tone.

"I tell you," said one, "it cannot fail. The train, with twelve cars and over twelve hundred Yankee troops must reach Brock's Corner in five hours."

"And the switch—the dead switch?" queried the other.

"Is thoroughly loosened, depend upon it, the rivets of the rails broken, and, on reaching Brock's, the train, instead of going straight along, will run for about forty rods along the old, broken track, and then go rolling down the precipice, bag and baggage, without a Yankee left to tell the tale."

"Good! Had we better remain here?"

"Yes, we had better loaf about the cabin to avoid suspicion, till the crash comes."

The speakers here drank their liquor, and moved to another part of the room, leaving young Silas in profound thought.

That the reader may understand the meaning of the above conversation as well as Silas did I must explain.

Brock's Corner, the point referred to by the men, was an abandoned station on the main road, about twenty-three miles from the Junction. During the construction of the road a switch had been located at this point, by which the main track could be shifted from its regular course to a short diagonal track, temporarily erected for the use of the workmen engaged in building the road. This side, or diagonal track, was only a few rods in length, and terminated at the brow of a very steep cliff, down which the waste dirt and rock had been dumped from the hand cars of the workmen. Of course, it had fallen into disuse when the road was completed, but had been permitted to remain—together with the switch connecting it with the main track—for the purpose of meeting any emergency that might arise, such as repairing the road, running off disabled rolling stock for a temporary resting place, and so on. The switch, with its connecting rods, was permitted to remain intact, but the rails of the main line were rendered immovable by being nailed to the tie, to prevent the jarring and oscillation which would otherwise have been apparent during the passage of a train. It was therefore called a dead switch.

Now, according to the conversation which young Swan had just overheard, the conspirators had unriveted the rails, drawn back the switch, and thus broken the connection of the main road, and shifted the track so that it corresponded with the old, unused track, the pursuance of which must, as a necessity, send the luckless train and all its contents to kingdom come by a flying leap down the precipice.

So you may judge what disturbance the revelation of this fiendish plot occasioned in the mind of Silas Swan, who knew the road perfectly, and who, moreover, was a good, loyal lad, and the son of a good, loyal man.

Silas turned the matter over in his mind very rapidly, and then yawning and rubbing his eyes as though he had just waked out of a sound nap, he arose and sauntered to the counter, behind which his grandfather was standing, and at which a number of men were drinking.

He managed to signal his grandfather without attracting the attention of any one else in the room, and then went out of the house. The old man, despite the lad's extreme youth, had so much confidence in his sagacity, that he made no delay in excusing himself, and following him out upon the road. Here, Silas almost parlyzed him by relating what he had just heard.

"Great heavens! what's to be done? They'll all be killed, sure as a gun!" exclaimed old Swan, in despair.

"There's only one thing to be done, granddad," said Silas; "the dead switch at Brock's must be replaced before the train reaches the turn."

"Impossible! It is twenty-three miles to Brock's, as the crow flies. It is now seven o'clock—the train will be there at twelve—we haven't a horse in the barn—the foraging parties have taken them all—oh, Jerusalem! They'll all be killed, sure as a gun!"

"A man might run the distance in time to spring the switch to its place," suggested Silas.

The old man shook his head despairingly.

"I'm too old to strike up a dog trot for more'n ten minutes," said he, "and it happens that nearly all them loafers in there to-night are shaky in their loyalty. By jingo, it looks like a put-up job! Oh, crimminy! they'll all be killed, sure as a gun!"

"Then I'm the man to go, granddaddy!" said little Silas, slapping his juvenile breast with confidence.

Despite his perplexity, the old man could not refrain from grinning.

"Don't be a fool, Silas," said he.

"I don't intend to be, grandad," was the reply. "Maybe I'll make the distance in time, and maybe I won't, but I'm going to try. There be plenty of big uns in this great war, on both sides, why shouldn't a little chap like I have a shy for the old flag? But don't stand moping here in the cold, granddad. Run in and bring me my hat and your revolver, without attracting attention, and I'll be off in a jiffy."

"But," persisted the old man, "you may find the switch so rusty that you can't move it."

"I'll do my best!" shouted Silas, losing his temper in a most unfilial way; and the old man trotted into the house forthwith.

He soon returned with Silas' hat, and a small revolver. Silas put the one on his head, stuck the other in his belt, and with a hearty "Good-by, granddad!" started down the middle of the track at a brisk run, leaving the old man gazing after him in speechless amazement at the confidence with which he set out upon an undertaking that might have tried the powers of a grown pedestrian.

Though young, and small for his age, Silas was a true mountain boy, and had been brought up in the roughest school. Nature had given him a strong, healthful constitution, and the severe discipline of a mountaineer's life, which had been his lot from the very cradle, had given his boyish frame muscles of iron and thews of steel; yet still, considering his extreme youth, the undertaking before him was a tremendous one.

Keeping the center of the track, which fortunately was mostly smooth and well filled up between the ties, he fell into a moderate trot, which he continued for miles, and then, with the perspiration rolling in streams from his forehead, notwithstanding the cold winds that swept down from the surrounding mountains, he fell into a brisk walk,

which, as he proceeded, he unconsciously permitted to diminish, little by little, into a slower gait.

"Five miles!" he ejaculated, as he passed a ruined sawmill by the side the road. And then, as if perceiving for the first time the slowness of the pace into which he had relaxed, he sprang again into his starting pace, though his limbs were something stiff.

It was a wildly beautiful scene. The railroad wound through deep gorges and glens along the verge of precipices. All around stretched and frowned the savage mountains of the Cumberland range, the wind of winter making a wild, doleful music through the dark pines that clothed them like a mantle of the night; and through flying clouds of scrappy fleece, the moon and wild-eyed stars looked down upon the figure of the speeding youth.

Once he passed a little, half-faded camp fire, and a savage-looking bushwhacker sprang toward him with a hallo, but he fled onward like a deer, and the pistol ball that followed him whistled harmlessly over his head.

He passed farms and cottages, with the lights still flickering from their windows, cabins in which, perhaps, he had playmates who were in the land of dreams, barns, and outhouses charred and blackened by the hand of war, lean cattle browsing dead grass in the moonlight, neglected cornfields and frozen streams, until finally he gasped: "Ten miles!" and fell into a walk.

He was now terribly tired, though as yet he suffered no pain.

He continued on, walking and running by turns, until at length, for the first time, he made a dead halt. The pain which he now suffered was not so much in his limbs as in his head. It seemed bursting. He thought if he should sit down and rest himself a little, it would do him good; but the cold air flapping upon his sweaty brow brought him to a sense of prudence, so he merely picked a hole in the ice of a small pool near by, dashed the chill water over his head and face, and considerably relieved, continued on his way.

Hour after hour did the brave lad struggle on, and upon attaining the eighteenth mile, his limbs pained him almost insupportably. There also seemed to be a heavy weight resting upon his chest, he frequently caught for breath, and there was a ringing in his ears. Several times—nay a hundred times—he concluded to stop, but the thought of his little life standing between twelve hundred men and death renerved him like the crack of a whip or the rowel of a spur, and he pressed on.

He passed through a long tunnel as black as Erebus, and grew frightened as he went splashing through the mud, and heard the ceaseless dripping of the water above and around him. He passed over numerous bridges, leaping on from crosstie to crosstie, while his heart sickened, as his downward glance caught glimpses of the cold, cruel river swirling on a hundred feet below. But still he pressed on.

Twenty miles!

He was ready to swoon. A high fever possessed his brain, his hands were swollen, and he seemed to be running in red-hot shoes of iron. But again he broke ice, and plunged his head in the chill waters, and moved on; though now he had to walk altogether.

One, two, three! He was on the last mile, and still he staggered on. A faint, far-off sound came floating down on the wind, and, with a feverish shout, he gathered his energies together, and sprang into a swifter pace.

It was the whistle of a locomotive. It was repeated again and again, each time growing more fearfully distinct.

But now he had almost reached his destination. He could see the deserted tool shed at the station. With a desperate effort, he leaped forward into a run. Even as he did so, away, far down the track, he saw a gleaming, like a lurid star.

It was the bull's-eye lantern on the fire steed's breast, and momentarily it swelled larger and larger, like a column of fire, while now he could hear the rumbling of the wheels that were freighted with twelve hundred human lives.

With a wild, feverish cry, Silas Swan stumbled from the center of the track and grasped the stiff iron rod of the switch.

Merciful Heaven! He could not budge it an inch. It was as the old man had feared. The rust of long disuse had made it obstinate to far stronger hands than his—young as they were, and already exhausted by terrific toil.

On came the train, and he struggled and rended with the switch, with starting eyes and foaming lips.

The whirling, crashing engine was almost upon him. Now or never! With one mighty effort he heaved the rod, the rails slid creakingly into their proper place, and the vast train sped on in safety, while Silas Swan sank, half fainting upon the ground.

But the conductor of the train, noticing the unusual oscillation of the cars and hearing the ringing of the rails, stopped the engine immediately, and, together with several military officers, got off.

There they found poor Silas, speechless and half dead, at the switch. A draft of brandy revived him sufficiently to enable him to relate where he had come from, and what he had come for, and what he had done, as well as to explain the nature of the terrible fate that had been averted through his instrumentality.

When they knew all they were so much astounded as to be almost deprived of speech; but Silas besought them not to mind him, but rather to hasten to the Junction and effect the capture of Darrell and his fellow conspirator.

"All in good time, my noble little fellow," said the officer, who appeared to be highest in command; "we have first to take care of you, who have saved the lives of all of us."

He raised him up tenderly in his strong arms and carried him into the car devoted to the officers, where Silas, thoroughly exhausted in both body and mind, fainted quite away. But every attention was paid to him, and even while they nursed and caressed him as tenderly as if he had been their own brother, the switch rails outside were reriveted, the treacherous switch itself broken to pieces, that it might never more be an instrument in the hands of the skulking foe, and then the train sped on toward the Junction.

Darrell and his companion—who proved to be a Confederate officer acting in the capacity of a spy—were both captured, and afterward executed.

Little Silas was sick for a long time, but eventually fully recovered his health and strength. He was then

employed as an orderly on the staff of the officer commanding the department, with whom he was always a pet, and if he and his grandfather now do not own as fine a farm as there is in east Tennessee, all I have to say is that it is not the fault of Uncle Sam.

THE SOLDIER'S FIRST FIGHT.

I shall never forget the first time I was under fire," said an old soldier to a party of veterans who were fighting their battles o'er again in the rotunda. "We were supporting a battery and lay down on a stretch of ground as level as a ballroom floor. The Confederates were beyond rifle shot, but they opened on us with artillery, and they did everlastingly plow up the ground with shot and shell. Every old soldier knows that artillery fire at long range is not half so much to be dreaded as the rattle of musketry, which sounds on a battlefield like Chinese firecrackers in a thunderstorm, but it is a good deal more 'skeery' to a novice. There we lay for half an hour, never moving a finger, watching the puffs of flame from a dozen cannon and the shells come tearing through the air with their fiendish shriek, apparently headed directly for our faces. I tell you, a position of that kind tries the very soul of your raw recruit. Give him a chance to shoot back and he is all right, but fighting is one thing and waiting to get killed without striking a blow is quite another. But there was more ahead for us. After the artillery duel had raged for some time, a regiment of the enemy's cavalry issued from the wood with all the deliberation and precision of a dress parade. They were tall, athletic fellows, who sat on their horses like centaurs. They halted and dressed ranks, while the batteries behind them hurled a perfect rain of shell over their heads. We could see their colonel riding down the line and pointing with his sword to our battery, which was plunging shells in among them with frightful rapidity, but little effect. They advance a step or two, every horseman seeming to choose his ground. Here they come, slowly, steadily, like a great gray wave, conscious of irresistible power. The bugle rings out sharp and shrill, they break into a quick trot, eight hundred sabers leap into the air. On they come; eight hundred yards, seven hundred, six hundred! Has our battery gone silent? Five hundred, four hundred! Charge! Every spur sinks deep, a yell rises from every throat, and the column leaps forward like a thunderbolt, into the face of which crashes the canister from our four six-pounders. Great ragged holes are torn through deep columns, but they close instantly and come on unchecked. Now it is our turn! We are in front of the battery, in the pathway of the avalanche. We pour a volley into it at eighty yards! A hundred brave men reel out of their saddles, a hundred horses go plunging to their knees! The line wavers! Another volley and another! The line breaks, and suddenly retreats. While we swing our caps and cheer and hug each other for joy. And that was war!"

EYELESS FISH IN BOILING WATER.

One of the most remarkable discoveries in the shape of a peculiar species of fish was that made at Carson City a number of years ago.

At that time both the Hale and Norcross and the Savage Mines were down to what is known as the "2,200-foot level." When at that depth a subterranean lake of boiling water was tapped.

This accident flooded both mines to a depth of 400 feet. After this water had all been pumped out, except that which had gathered in basins and in the inaccessible portions of the works, and when the water still had a temperature of 128 degrees—nearly scalding hot—many queer-looking little blood-red fish were taken out.

In appearance they somewhat resembled the gold fish. They seemed lively and sportive enough when they were in their native element—boiling water—notwithstanding the fact that they did not even have rudimentary eyes.

When the fish were taken out of the hot water and put into buckets of cold water, for the purpose of being transported to the surface, they died as quickly as a perch or bass would if plunged into a kettle of water that was scalding hot; not only this, but the skin peeled off exactly as if it had been boiled.

Eyeless fish are common enough in all subterranean lakes and rivers, but this is the only case on record of living fish being found in boiling water.

SIGN LANGUAGES.

Sign languages are both very old and very widespread. The most perfect, and perhaps the most ancient, is that of the aborigines, of North America. By its means Indians of all tribes and nations, from Alaska to Panama, can converse with each other with perfect understanding. It has its general signs, its conversational signs, and its tribal signs. Moreover, it is capable of much elaboration. At Washington, on March 6th, 1880, seven Ute Indians who were proficient in the sign language were introduced to seven deaf mutes, and conversed with them. The experiment was entirely successful. Again, in some civilized communities it has been thought convenient to cultivate a sign language. The Cistercian monks, for instance, hold speech to be sinful, and communicate with each other as if they were deaf mutes. A most striking example of the perfection to which sign language can be brought occurred in 1282. In that year, the Sicilian Vespers rebellion was arranged throughout the island, and even the day and hour fixed, without a word being spoken or written. Lastly, there is the finger language of the Oriental market, by means of which merchants arrange their bargains, with hands clasped beneath their long sleeves, without uttering a single word.

ABOUT PARROTS.

It is a popular belief, which investigation has shown to be erroneous, that all parrots can talk. In fact, very few have the power of articulation, among the best talkers being the gray and the green parrots and their several varieties. Macaws sometimes talk, but their voices are disagreeably hoarse and inhuman. Parrots are considered the talking birds par excellence, but there are other feathered creatures which are much more accomplished linguists than they. Ravens, crows, and magpies are all better speakers than parrots. They are not so versatile, it is true, and the sounds they are able to produce are not so varied, but their voices and articulations are far more human. A crow's talk in the next room may readily be mistaken for that of a human being, but the same can hardly be said of a parrot's speaking.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Once a Boy Thief; Dies a Real Hero.

Judge John J. Dobler, of the criminal court, at Baltimore, Maryland, has received information of the death of a boy thief whom he had paroled, and who had won a fight with himself and had established a home for his mother and a name for himself despite a bad start.

Early last spring the youth came to Baltimore with two companions for the purpose of robbing a factory. The detectives had such a clear case against one of the boys that conviction was certain.

Little could be said in favor of the young man. He knew that his mother was extremely poor, and that his father was in an insane asylum. Instead of helping bear the burden of the mother, he had left home, drifted from city to city, and, when he became involved in minor troubles, drew relief from the scanty savings at home. Judge Dobler was not inclined to be lenient, but the pleas of the mother won, and a parole was granted.

The youth left Baltimore, returned to his mother, and for a time maintained his associations with men who were worthless. Then suddenly there came a change and a realization of duty. He went to New York, and got employment in the freight division of a railroad. He had a remarkable aptitude for this work. He was promoted three times within as many months, finally being made an assistant paymaster.

He saved his money, fitted up a little flat, and sent for his mother. On the day she arrived he had supper ready for her. This was early in December, and there was joy in the hearts of both as they looked forward to a year of joy.

Intuition told the mother that the reformation of her boy was complete. One morning, when the lad was leaving for work, he asked her to write to some Baltimore friends who showed him the way to better things. He said he intended writing to Judge Dobler personally.

A little later a messenger came to the tiny home to notify the mother that her son had been killed. He had arrived at the yards, where all was bustle in the handling of freight. There was a shortage of help. One employee was worn out by lack of sleep, and the young paymaster volunteered to do his work. In helping to shunt several cars to a siding, his foot caught in a switch and he was cut to pieces.

Big Leagues Open in April.

According to announcement the American League will open its season April 14, and will close October 7. The National League season will open the same date, but will end two days earlier. The joint schedule committee, consisting of Barney Dreyfuss and John Heydler, of the National League, and B. B. Johnson, of the American League, is expected to make a report soon.

Cranks Auto, and Loses It.

While Peter Hoff was crossing the railroad tracks near the Northwestern depot, at Port Washington, Wis., his car came to a sudden stop and in his hurry to get off the track Hoff jumped out and cranked the machine, but had forgotten to set the brake. With the throttle wide open the car started forward. Hoff was thrown down, the car going over his body and then started down Grand Avenue, broke down a hitching post and then collided with the saloon building of Peter Watry, junior. Mr. Hoff was picked up unconscious and is in a critical condition. The car is probably a total loss.

Bossy May Walk on a Crutch in Near Future.

The expression, "as awkward as a cow on a crutch," is an old and truly ridiculous saying, but a cow on a crutch is not so impossible, after all, according to Doctor James McGalloway, a Scotch veterinarian, who arrived in New York recently. The Scotchman has invented a wooden leg for cows.

Doctor McGalloway, who came to America to introduce his wooden leg for cows, declares it is a mistake to throw Bossy away or to have her shot if she breaks a limb. He claims the wooden substitute is practical and will be used generally in the future.

Displaying the photograph of a kind, silver-faced Holstein, romping over the golf links near Kirkintulloch, Scotland, with a wooden peg taking the place of her right foreleg, Doctor McGalloway explained that it was an operation he performed recently. He said he amputated the real leg and substituted a wooden one with a steel brace.

New Banks Will Lend to the Wage Earner.

A system of banks throughout the United States, which will enable the American wage earner to borrow money easily and cheaply, is the plan of Julius Rosenwald, of Chicago, as announced in Chicago by telegraph from Berlin, Germany, where Rosenwald is spending a part of the winter. Not only is it the plan to enable the poor man to borrow money under conditions, which will make it possible for him to get out of debt, but also to injure the business of the loan shark, who lends money at such exorbitant rates that the borrower seldom is able to repay his debts, and instead goes in deeper and deeper.

The first bank will be opened in Chicago in the spring, but later other institutions will be started in various parts of the country. The entire system will be capitalized for $5,000,000.

Although official announcement has not been made, it is understood that Vincent Astor and Andrew Carnegie are associated with Rosenwald in the proposed wage-loan system.

Widows Are Often Prey of Swindler.

According to the estimates of Sylvester C. Dunham, head of one of the large insurance companies, swindlers procured $770,000,000 in the last year from widows and inexperienced investors in the United States.

Dunham declares widows are more easily persuaded to invest in "blue-sky" propositions, than any other class of persons, for the reason that they believe most of what is told them. He declares they are not so "wise" as they should be, after having been married.

"A fairly good-looking man, who can talk only passably well, can persuade most any widow that his particu-

lar brand of investment will bring her an income for life," says the life-insurance head.

In the last year the government has exposed fraudulent schemes which in that period alone have added $77,000,000 to the bank rolls of the swindlers, according to low estimates, and Dunham thinks his estimate that ten times that amount has been plucked by means of swindles not yet detected, is equally conservative. Many of the schemes for making easy money from trusting widows are not discovered because of the legal advice given by clever but dishonest lawyers, who are attorneys for the swindlers.

It is declared that the trade in "sucker lists," as the compiled names of prospective purchasers are called, is more flourishing than it ever has been before. Lists may be procured from many of the large corporations for a nominal sum.

Jumps on Log and is Caught by Deer Trap.

When R. G. Umstatter, of Newark, N. J., came down from the deer country in northern Maine, where he has been shooting for several weeks, and prepared to start for his home, he was mighty glad to be able to start for anywhere.

When walking toward his camp in the Squia Pan region at the end of a good day, he saw a log lying across the roadway. He jumped on it and the next view he had of the universe was from a point ten feet in the air where he was dangling from a stout sapling. As he reasoned the matter out from his upside-down point of view he realized that some pot hunter had set the trap for a deer.

Umstatter, who weighs more than 200 pounds, and who had never asserted on any occasion that he was a contortionist, saw that his only hope was in reaching the tops of his high hunting boots and freeing his foot. He wiggled and swung for an hour before he succeeded in making the big bend, and during that time formed a permanent impression of all pot hunters. When he reached Bangor he was still lame and sore from the experience.

Smith is at Head of "White Hopes."

The recent defeat of Arthur Pelkey, conqueror of Luther McCarty, by "Gunboat" Smith, hailed as the modern Fitzsimmons, because he weighs only 180 pounds or thereabouts, while his opponents are always much heavier, not only was a surprise, but it has caused several equally surprising developments.

Smith's victory was not so much of a surprise as was the manner in which he decisively whipped Pelkey. The latter was a complete failure as a "white hope," even though the qualifications for this class of "fighters" are not many nor difficult to fill.

Although the Gunboat knocked out Pelkey in the fifteenth round his showing is declared to have been almost as poor as his unfortunate opponent's. The expression "Smith was poor, but Pelkey was worse" apparently fits the situation. According to coast critics, Smith, who is entitled to the glory of being boss of the "white-hope" class, made no showing that could possibly place him in the class with Jeffries, Corbett, Sullivan, Fitzsimmons, or even the unfortunate McCarty.

The Smith-Pelkey bout accomplished one good turn in that it eliminated one of the aspirants for the heavyweight title. A year ago Morris, Pelkey, Daly, Palzer, and a score of others were claiming the right to battle for the heavyweight crown, but to-day Smith, Willard, and one or two others, are all that have the nerve to claim any distinction.

But there may be a change, for several of the ex-champions apparently have the "come-back" bee buzzing in their hats. Even Jim Jeffries, who it was thought, would never recover from the disgrace of his last bout with Jack Johnson, may make a world tour with his wife, Barney Oldfield and wife, and Jack Kipper and wife. The trip will be a sort of come-back attempt.

Bob Fitzsimmons, who is more than half a century old, being the dean of the ex-champions, aside from the famous John L. Sullivan, wants to get back in the squared circle. He really made preparations for an attempt, but the boxing commission of New York State, where he proposed to have his first bout, barred him from participation in the fight game on the grounds that he was too old.

Tommy Burns, who is credited with being responsible for the black man's possession of the heavyweight title, following the defeat of his protégé, Pelkey, by Smith, declared he would reënter the ring in an attempt to win the championship and incidentally to keep a meal ticket in the Burns family.

But while Gunboat Smith is looked on in this country as the best of the heavies, Carpentier, the wonderful French fighter, who in recent years has been graduated from the bantamweight to the heavyweight division, must not be overlooked. He has won all of his contests since entering the latter class, and is credited with two easy knock-outs over Bombardier Wells, the English champion.

Dies Saving Two Girls on Trestle.

Caught upon Long Hollow trestle of the Clover Leaf Railroad, near Hanson, Ill., by a train, Tony Liuneanch, 22 years old, gave up his life in saving his sister, Miss Carrie Liuneanch, and Miss Lulu Sloat. He carried the two young women in his arms almost to the end of the trestle and dropped them in shallow water and soft earth near the bank of the creek. They were uninjured, but before he could jump the engine struck him and threw him into the creek with a crushed skull.

George Smith, who was with the party, jumped and was uninjured.

"Movie" Man Gets a Real Mob Scene.

Because they wanted to earn their dinner and a dollar by acting in a moving-picture drama at Petzwood, Pa., 300 unemployed men almost mobbed the man who needed 100 "actors." Benches were broken and considerable damage was done about the station.

Ending His Long Trip, Pushing Wheelbarrow.

Erhard Reichl, 25 years old, who is walking 2,000 miles and wheeling a wheelbarrow, has reached Maiden Rock, Wis. He is accompanied by his dog "Brownie," and carries on his barrow a load of 200 pounds, consisting of tent, blankets, et cetera. He started from Ironwood, Mich., June 10, and is now on the last lap of his trip.

Indian Catcher Only Baseball Vegetarian.

Garland (Chief) Nevitt is the only vegetarian, noncoffee-drinking ball player in professional ranks, but this is not the only particular in which he differs from other athletes.

Nevitt is making a study of baseball and is spending the winter at a physical-training school, at Battle Creek,

Mich., in connection with a sanitarium. Each day he goes through all the motions of ball playing in the gymnasium and is making a specialty of how to improve his wind, speed, arm, and batting eye.

He is 23 years old, is a full-blood Delaware Indian, was reared at Pawhuska, Okla., and was educated at the Haskell Institute, at Lawrence, Kan. He is a catcher with the Battle Creek team of the Southern Michigan League.

Stormy Sea Bares Lost Girl's Body.

A hurricane, which recently raged along the Atlantic coast for more than twenty-four hours, accomplished more than all the detectives in the East were able to do in a month, for it unraveled the mystery of the disappearance of Miss Jessie E. McCann, a young settlement worker, when her body was washed ashore by the heavy surf at Coney Island.

A signet ring bearing the initials "J. E. M." furnished the first clew as to the identity of the body, but later the McCann family identified two stick pins, the shoes, and the dress. When the father, mother, and sister, Ethel, were confronted with the evidence that the young woman was dead, they collapsed, but later the father stated that he was relieved that the suspense had been lifted. The features of the girl had been so badly battered in the surf that without the clothing and jewelry the body could not have been recognized as that of the missing girl.

Miss McCann was last seen alive December 5, at a point 200 feet from where the ocean cast up her body. This was the day following her disappearance. It is believed she threw herself into the ocean or jumped off one of the piers, while suffering from a nervous breakdown. She had been subject to severe nervous attacks during the three months prior to her sudden disappearance.

The girl's father called on the mayor and the police department for aid and an unusually rigid search was made for her throughout the country. Newspapers gave the disappearance much publicity, the father had her picture flashed on the screens of thousands of moving-picture theaters and the Epworth League offered a reward of $1,000 for information leading to her discovery.

The disappearance of Miss McCann was very similar to that of Dorothy Arnold, for like the latter, Miss McCann was a social worker and was 23 years old. However, Miss Arnold's disappearance has never been solved, and her relatives and friends have abandoned all hope of ever finding her alive or of recovering her body if she is dead.

Cheap Colt Biggest Winner.

It is not often that a $90 horse is able to go forth and battle with the very best of the Grand Circuit brigade, and it is not customary for a country cheese merchant to campaign the fastest pacer in the 2:05 class. The records for the racing season just closed, however, prove that to the lot of a cheap horse and a country owner have come the honor of heading the list of money winners in the 2:05 class.

When William Maple, of Converse, Ind., bid $90 for a tall, long-legged and rather coarse black colt at a sale held three years ago, he builded better than he knew.

The following spring the colt, under the name of Walter Cochato, took a record of 2:17¼ as a three-year-old over the half-mile track at Rushville, Ind.

Now the name of Walter Cochato is known from one end of the Grand Circuit to the other. Opposite the name stands a record of 2:04½ and the statistics for the last racing season show that he won the princely sum of $6,500, the largest amount credited to any pacer in the 2:05 class.

Wins Forty-nine Games of Checkers in Two Hours.

Pitted against thirty-nine checker players at one time, William Bowles, of Farmington, Iowa, won forty-nine games, drew ten, and lost six out of a total of sixty-three games played within two hours.

He had offered to meet all comers in simultaneous competition in the contest staged at the Central Y. M. C. A. Two hundred spectators freely offered suggestions to Bowles' opponents, but not to him.

Bowles made the rounds of the thirty-nine boards in an average of thirteen minutes. He was defeated in two out of three games by M. Goeld, of St. Louis. Others who won one game each from Bowles were: Fred Gidcomb, of Mount Carmel, Ill.; L. Troxler, of Springfield, Mo.; William Layton, and M. Alterkruse, of St. Louis.

Gets a Check for Pig Killed Forty Years Ago.

Heirs of Thomas Madison, near Meadville, Pa., have received a check for $21 from Harry Thompson for a pig killed by Thompson's dog forty years ago.

The Madisons and Thompsons formerly lived on adjoining farms. One day a young pig belonging to Madison wandered on to Thompson's property. Thompson set a dog after the pig, which fell dead from exhaustion.

Madison died four years ago. The episode of the pig was forgotten.

The other day the executor of Madison's estate received a letter inclosing a check and explaining the circumstances of the pig's death.

Thompson attended a mission recently and heard a sermon that caused him to repent. The check was returned to Thompson, who is poor.

Home of Cats and Gold is Torn Down.

Hundreds of curiosity seekers braved rain and waded through mud recently at Wesson, Miss., to visit an old, dilapidated residence, built in 1840, on one of Wesson's main streets. The building had not been occupied for years. It was suddenly brought into public attention in this way:

Situated next door to a large boarding house and surrounded by several fine residences, the building's roof was badly decayed and the wooden pillars starting to fall from under it. The adjacent property owners were afraid it would catch on fire and burn them out of house and home. They made complaint to the mayor and board of aldermen, who asked its owner to either put the building in good repair or remove it. He did not care to repair the house, so he sold it.

For some time past citizens in that neighborhood have been missing their house cats, of which there were many, until not a cat could be seen around any of the homes, and it was decided that some person had been killing them with poison, until one day when W. G. Bailey, who bought the house, began to tear it down. He was almost frightened away by a peculiar noise. Some say they had been hearing this noise for a long time, and were afraid to pass the structure at night, believing it haunted. On the day of demolition all their mysteries were solved when the workmen tore away a portion of

the walls and 500 cats came running out, going in all directions.

Among the cats was Wesson's chief, "Tom," a favorite that had been mourned as dead a long time. As the cats came out the amazed workmen threw hammers, bricks, et cetera, at them as they sped swiftly away. Just how the cats got into the inclosure and could not get out is known only to themselves.

That was attraction No. 1. After this excitement the purchaser of said house resumed his work, and was about to forget his experience with the house cats until he pulled down another portion of the walls, when about a peck of $20 gold pieces came rolling out on his feet.

The news soon spread over the community, and many have been curious to see the lodging place of so many cats and so much gold. It is not known how the money came to be in the walls of the old house, but some believe that the Copeland gang hid away $100,000 in gold somewhere in Wesson during their time, and many deep holes have been dug in the hillsides by those whose hope was to find gold. The house was about the only one in that part of town during Copeland's time.

At any rate, the old structure has created a sensation in its last days, and Bailey is delighted over his purchase, while others who refused to pay the price asked for it now threaten to order a kicking machine for personal use. A souvenir of this interesting house with its history will probably be sent to the New Orleans Exhibition in 1915. In the meantime Bailey will take life easy and enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Goose Bait Catches Eagle.

Aaron Hart, of Winslow, Ark., caught a large eagle in a steel trap. As Hart went into his field to drive in his geese the eagle flew up from the carcass of a nice fat goose it had just killed. A trap was set beside the dead goose and soon the eagle returned, and in walking around his prey stepped into the trap. The eagle measured six feet eight inches from tip to tip of the wings and three feet from the bill to the end of the tail.

Safety on His Gun Breaks.

Frank Goodrich, 22 years old, of Marshall, Mich., blew off his right hand when he placed it over the top of his gun barrel while hunting rabbits. The safety spring on the gun broke, causing the accident.

Jury in Session One Year.

After deliberations lasting nearly a year the coroner's jury called January 7, 1913, to investigate the murder of George V. McElhenny, postmaster of Louisburg, Kan., has announced its verdict. It did not clear the mystery, finding that McElhenny was killed by unknown persons.

McElhenny was shot from the darkness as he was sitting near an open door at his home October 4, 1912.

Facts You May Not Know.

Dogs do not perspire. In hot weather they regulate the temperature of their blood by breathing more quickly, which produces a rapid evaporation of water from the surface of the lungs. That is why a dog pants so in hot weather.

Frog skin makes the toughest leather, in proportion to its thickness.

By mere waste, caused by coins rubbing one against another, the civilized world, it is said, loses one and one-fourth tons of gold and eighty-eight tons of silver annually.

An attempt will be made to organize Federal civil-service employees all over the United States and unite them in a national organization.

Save in cases of emergency, a continuous twenty-four-hour rest in every seven days must be given employees of every factory and mercantile establishment in New York State, in accordance with the provisions of a new law.

The workers of one bee colony easily cover as much as twice the distance between the earth and the moon in one day. The distance of the moon from the earth is 237,600 miles. Therefore, the gathering of about ten quarts of honey means, totaling the flight of all the workers of the colony, a flight of some 475,200 miles.

Women form about 35 per cent of the total immigration into the United States.

The microscope is in daily use in the examination of metals and alloys in more than 200 laboratories in the United States.

Woman Finds Buried Gold.

Seventy $20 gold pieces were found by Mrs. William McCorkle, of McCool, Ind., buried under a tree where they had been hidden eight years ago by her father, Nathaniel Marshall, a carpenter.

The Marshall family dispersed after the home was burned eight years ago. Mr. Marshall himself went to live with a son in Iowa. Before Mr. Marshall died he told his son of burying the gold under a tree opposite his old home.

The young man did not credit the story, but when he met Mrs. McCorkle at a Christmas reunion he told the father's story. The discovery of the $1,400 was the result.

Bride Must Use Ladder to Kiss Giant Kansan.

The strangest wedding in Texas recently took place at Fort Worth, Texas, when Oscar Kreuse, 7 feet 1 inch tall, married Mrs. Martha Duncan, 4 feet 11 inches tall. The midget bride just reaches her giant husband's lower vest pocket.

But for all that it was a case of love at first sight; both say so. Kreuse has lived in Fort Worth many years. In Kansas Kreuse acquired the title of the "Kansas Giant."

It is impossible for the bride to hug her husband around the neck, except with the use of a stepladder. Kreuse is 45 years old and his wife is 50.

Mexican Indians Become Cannibals.

Stories of cannibalism to escape starvation on the part of the natives of the State of Sinaloa, Mexico, were brought to Los Angeles by Otto Hallmer, of Chicago. Hallmer, a young civil engineer, says American Consul Hostetter, of Hermosillo, Sonora, asked him to appeal to the American people to aid the Yaquis and peons in Sinaloa.

The engineer says he escaped from the district after a fight with native bandits in which three of the Indians were killed. The American party then traveled for hundreds of miles over the desert, living for twenty-three days on mule meat, rattlesnakes, wolf meat, and dogs.

"Starvation has driven the Yaqui Indians and Mexican peons of the upper Sinaloa district to cannibalism," Hall-

mer said. "Human flesh is being roasted over mountain and desert camp fires to stave off the death that is facing 10,000 men, women, and children.

"Mothers are butchering their own children or sacrificing themselves by suicide to feed their dying offspring.

"Strong men are slaughtering the weak, and the cripples, battle-wounded, and deformed are being slain by their own brothers and sisters.

"Hunger has driven practically the whole mountain and desert population insane and white men cornered there are eating rattlesnakes and wolves.

"Except in the towns, which are controlled by the constitutionalists, and where food prices are exorbitant, the whole of upper Sinaloa is within the starvation belt.

"Skeletons litter the trails through the mountains and over the deserts, and the scattered, picked bones, charred and blackened, tell of cannibalism.

"One day investigators will come upon a hut with a dozen children and hunger-mad parents; the next day the children are gone, the parents are insane, but fed, and tiny skeletons cover the sands.

"Go a hundred miles from any Sinaloa town and the evidences of the terrible conditions are seen on every trail, at every deserted ranch, by every camp fire, and near every adobe shack.

"Existence has become a matter of hours. Casualties in Mexican battles are small in comparison to the deaths by starvation, murder, and suicide—but suicide is the last resort.

"Mexican mothers are prone to believe that self-preservation is the first law of nature, and they kill their young nine times out of ten before turning the knives upon themselves."

Hallmer intends to enlist a force of men and then go back to Sinaloa to regain control and develop his gold property.

Ties Three Kids in a Bag.

Patsy Pedrede started from Hackensack, N. J., to New York with three baby goats, which were to provide a treat at an Italian banquet. He was arrested by Constable Ernest Trainor for having the goats tied together in a bag. The legs of the kids were also tied tightly, and when the constable told Pedrede to untie them he replied, "Go scratch yourself."

"Just for that you come with me," replied Trainor, and Justice James Bratt fined Pedrede $15 and $2 costs.

"I'm getting more than that for the kids, so I'll pay," said Pedrede. He crated the goats and continued his journey.

Trappers Get a White Fox.

Frank and Josiah Edwards, trappers, who live north of Burlington, Ark., captured a snow-white fox the other night. Although the actual market value of the fur is not known the Edwards brothers have refused an offer of $10 for it. This fox should not be confused with the silver fox, as it is in reality an albino of the red or the gray fox family. Two albino possums were recently captured in north Arkansas.

Faces Poorhouse, Becomes Wealthy.

Only three months ago Mrs. Lottie Hammock, of Morris, Okla., a widow, and her seven children were threatened with starvation or the poorhouse. But the year 1914 has smiled on the widow, and she is now the owner of an eighty-acre farm with five oil wells on it, and also a bank account of something like $200,000.

When Mrs. Hammock's husband died he left her a farm, unimproved, and with a heavy mortgage on it. The land was so poor that it was impossible for the widow to make a living for herself and children from it, but she struggled on until three months ago the farm was advertised for sale under a mortgage foreclosure. But Fate and a kind man intervened.

E. W. Kimbley, an oil man, who in his day had heard adversity beating upon his door, heard about the widow's misfortune. Kimbley at the same time was in hard luck. He had been following the fortunes of the oil field in Oklahoma for several years, and his bad luck had become so proverbial that oil men had come to know him as "Dry-hole" Kimbley.

Every oil well that he drilled was not a well at all—it was a dry hole. So many failures had he registered that oil men came to look upon him as a hoodoo and would not let him in on an oil proposition if they could help it, and consequently his credit was at lowest ebb.

But Kimbley gathered together a little group of prosperous oil men and induced them to take a gambling chance on drilling for oil on the widow's farm. It was a wildcat scheme and a long chance, but they agreed to take the loss of the well if it did not produce oil. It was what gamblers call a long shot, but this time it won.

The drill in wildcat territory found a new and wonderfully rich oil and opened up what is now known as the Booch sand field northeast of Morris. There are now five producing oil wells on the eighty acres. They have made Mrs. Hammock rich and they are making many other people in that territory rich, also.

When the oil men decided to drill a well for the widow they first had to get an injunction from the court to restrain the foreclosure of the mortgage to give them time to drill. Now the mortgage has been paid off, Mrs. Hammock presented with a clear title to the land, and the same day that her benefactors turned over the deed to her they also passed her a bank book which showed $200,000 to her credit from oil sold.

Kimbley's luck also turned. After his long record of dry holes and expensive failures he got a pay streak in the Morris field, and his dry holes became gushers and he is now climbing up into the millionaire class.

Thirty-foot Mastodon Unearthed in Virginia.

Blue Ridge Springs, Va., has been thrown into excitement as the result of the unearthing of what is said to be the skeleton of a huge mastodon. The discovery was made near Blue Ridge Springs by S. D. Taliaferro, of Salem, Va., superintendent of a crushing plant, and the skeleton will be offered to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. The skeleton measures thirty feet in length, with jaws four feet in width, ribs six inches wide, teeth five inches in width, and tusks five feet in length.

The find was twenty feet below the surface.

Orders "Mother" Jones Away.

Forcibly deported from the coal-strike district upon her arrival at Trinidad, Colo., from El Paso, Texas, "Mother" Jones, the aged labor agitator, declared that she would return.

On orders of Adjutant General Chase, in charge of the militia in the strike region, Captain E. A. Smith and a

detachment of soldiers met her at the Trinidad depot, kept her under surveillance until a train for Denver arrived, and then put her aboard. Four soldiers accompanied her there, and escorted her to a hotel.

It was reported that General Chase had given orders that her appearance in any portion of the martial-law zone would result in immediate imprisonment for her. From the first day of military rule, Chase had asserted that "Mother" Jones would not be permitted to visit among the strikers. Governor Ammons had stated his disapproval of her methods.

Indian Dives into Barrel.

Julius Williams, a well-known Indian, of Gibbon, Ore., was killed when he fell headforemost into a barrel, which had been set in the ground by a railway company, to hold water for the protection of a bridge from fire. A coroner's inquest showed that the Indian fell into the barrel and was so numb from cold that he was unable to extricate himself from the water.

Five Generations in Family.

There are now five generations in the family of Mrs. Lavinia Kier, who lives near Stanberry, Mo.

Mrs. Kier is 85 years of age, and has spent nearly all her life in Gentry County.

The names of the feminine descendants comprising the five generations are: Mrs. Lavinia Kier, Sadie Galentine, Mrs. Fannie Lewis, Mrs. Grace Funderbuck, and Hazel Funderbuck. The last named is 2 months old. These descendants of Mrs. Kier were born and reared in the above vicinity.

United States Sends Check for One Cent.

One check for $67,660 and another for 1 cent, appeared at the department of commerce, at Washington, recently.

The former, made out to Secretary Redfield, was for the government sale of Alaska seal and blue and white fox skins, recently held in St. Louis. It was the first ever held in America.

The cent check was to George Johannes, disbursing officer of the department, who formerly held a similar position at the census bureau. When he turned over his accounts the treasury department discovered that he had cheated himself out of one cent, and returned it in the form of check. Mr. Johannes said he probably would keep the check as a souvenir of Uncle Sam's honesty.

Cold Bath for Ezra Meeker.

Ezra Meeker, the octogenarian pioneer of the Puget Sound country, who drove an ox cart all the way to Washington a few years ago, recently underwent a severe surgical operation in a Seattle hospital. Three days later the old man, scornfully disdaining alcohol rubs, was arguing and struggling with his nurses for a cold-water bath. In the end he got it and felt better.

Farmer Kills Aged Goose.

Shamrock, a 23-year-old goose, owned by Peter Hennigan, of Livingston, N. J., which was well known because of his habit of following its owner about like a dog, was killed by Hennigan because of its pugnacious disposition. Of late the goose had attacked every one who came in the yard, and had injured some children. Hennigan found inside the goose a small watch charm which he brought from Ireland forty years ago, and which he lost more than twenty years ago. Hennigan had suspected a farm hand of stealing the charm and discharged him.

Goats Terrorize Town in Mexico.

San Luis Potos, Mexico, has been in such a state of excitement because of the prospect of an attack by revolutionists that a panic broke out when a herd of goats appeared on the highway. When a cloud of dust was seen nearly everybody in town believed the hour of attack had come. Stores and houses were hurriedly closed and the doors barricaded and detachments of troops and police with cannon were rushed through the streets to the points which had been chosen for defense. Soon afterward it was found that the "army" consisted of 500 goats being driven to market.

Atlanta Prison Inquiry Up.

Assistant Attorney General Graham, of the department of justice, at Washington, has received a request from Representative Howard, of Georgia, for a Federal investigation of the Atlanta penitentiary. He will examine the congressman's data and later report to Attorney General McReynolds.

Joins Mother After Fourteen Years.

After fourteen years, John James Hurley has returned to Punxsutawney, Pa., to join his mother, Mrs. William Hughes, whose whereabouts he discovered recently while he was working as a baker in a plant at South Bend, Wash. A former neighbor of his mother told him where she might be found.

Hurley's father, John Hurley, left his wife before the boy's birth, but returned when the child was 6 years old and tried to get custody of him. Later, the youth disappeared, and the father was accused of kidnaping him, but the case was never proved.

From that time until the boy returned, a full-grown man, weighing 186 pounds, the mother never knew where her son was, and the latter did not even know his mother was alive. The boy traveled with his father nearly all his life until recently, but for several months he has heard nothing from the elder Hurley.

Ape Hangs Self With Chain.

While hunting in the timber near Ridgeway, Mo., Ora Fordyce found the body of an unusually large monkey in a tree. The carcass was securely fastened to a branch of the tree by a long chain which was attached to a collar that it wore, and it had evidently hanged itself.

Where the ape came from remains a mystery. Its color was a reddish brown. Fordyce will have it stuffed and mounted.

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